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Media Use in the Domestic Setting: The Politics of Watching Television

by

Stuart W. Hemerling

a thesis
submitted to the faculty of graduate studies and research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta
spring, 1991

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Department of Sociology, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Media Use in the Domestic Setting: The Politics of Watching Television" submitted by Stuart W. Hemerling in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Date April 22, 1991

Abstract

This research attempts to determine the ways in which the politics of the family frame how television is used by family members. The theoretical foundations and criticisms of the uses and gratifications tradition of audience research are outlined in the preliminary part of the thesis. Audience research originating in the cultural studies perspective is outlined and the possibilities for synthesis with gratifications research are suggested. An original empirical audience study modeled on Morley's (1986) research on family uses of television is outlined. Using a qualitative methodological approach consisting of semi-structured interviews of Canadian household members, an analysis of family uses of television is conducted. Findings of the empirical research are discussed with respect to a set of outlined working hypotheses regarding how the experience of television in the household context is mediated by the micro-political framework of the family itself. The concluding section of the thesis discusses the contributions that the thesis makes to various traditions of audience centred research.

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I. Introduction

The organization of everyday family life around the activity of watching television is the specific focus of this thesis. How do families integrate the television around their everyday tasks? What do they watch? How do they watch? With whom do individual family members watch? How does the family setting affect the experience of watching television? In this paper these questions and others will be examined in an attempt to answer the broader question "In what ways does the context of the family setting structure the ways in which television is viewed?" In applying the specific activity of watching television in the broader social context of the domestic setting it will attempt to look beyond the 'taken-for-granted' aspect of life. The present introductory chapter attempts to outline some of the historical context to the debates surrounding the rise of media research in general, and audience research in particular.

A. The Emergence of Mass Media Research

One of the largest and most significant changes to modern industrial societies in the post-war era has been the rise of the mass media. Mass mediated messages permeate to a seemingly ever-increasing extent in everyday life. They have become an everyday reality whose non-existence can hardly be imagined. Their impact upon the lives of everyone has even become the focus of public and private debate. What the advent of the mass media means for our society is a subject which itself has a large audience. Academicians have been no less interested than laypersons in addressing questions relating to the emergence of the 'mass media' in relation to its audience. During the past several decades both inside and outside of the discipline of sociology, scholars have speculated on the question of relationship between the media and the media audience. Within the sociology of mass communications, the uses and gratifications tradition has been and continues to be a research tradition that attempts to explain why people willingly attend to mass media and to answer the question of what it is in mass media that they find useful for their lives.

The present piece of research attempts to answer these questions with respect to perhaps the most popular mass medium, that of television. It attempts, however, to address these questions in ways rather unfamiliar to much of the work within this audience centered tradition. It attempts to extend concerns raised in the uses and gratifications and incorporate insights from the British cultural studies tradition.

The twentieth century has witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of forms of media available to many people simultaneously. Subsequent to the advent of popular media such as radio and television, questions concerning the implications of such media became common in academic circles both in North America and in Europe. The various traditions of media research that have emerged, have developed according to a series of intellectual and historical factors. This chapter attempts to outline the paradigms of research on both sides of the Atlantic that have dominated the study of the media during the century of its emergence. The historical relationship between the divergent paradigms of research provides a background against which a discussion of possible convergences can be conducted.

B. Effects Research

During the pre Second World War era the dominant paradigm operating in mass communications was distinctly behaviorist in North America. The audience of mass communicated messages (particularly those produced by government, and especially military propaganda) was conceived as consisting of individuals atomized from their social context. Individuals were conceptualized as being at the mercy of the message itself, as passive dupes to the effects of the message. Not only were individuals susceptible to the media's influence, but everyone was considered to be equally susceptible. As a result, great power was conferred on the producer of the mass mediated message to control the thoughts, actions, and attitudes of atomized individuals in the 'mass society'.

The 'hypodermic needle' theory of direct effects (as it was referred to) measured the extent and effectiveness of power exerted in short term effects. Methodologically the experimental research design became the method of choice for determining message effects on the audience. Work within the paradigm continued and eventually the findings accumulated. It became apparent, however, that the findings associated with simplistic stimulus-response effects were scant and satisfaction with the paradigm as a whole was low (McQuail, 1984a).

Effects research was criticized for its failure to examine long-term effects, which was an impossibility given the limitations imposed by the logic of experimental research designs that were common. What are the consequences that the media is there at all, in the form it is, over the long term? This question could not be asked nor answered given the methodological limitations of the experimental design. Moreover, effects research was criticized for its inability to deal with individual differences between audience members. Social and psychological differences between audience members were completely ignored. The uneven findings of effects research indicated that influence did not 'stick' to many individuals in the audience, and suggested that some (at least half of) audience members were not mere passive targets of media manipulation. This raised the question of whether receivers of mass mediated messages approach the message with different needs and motivations. These questions were to guide audience research to the development of the early gratifications studies. Attention had to be diverted away from the power of the message itself and the sender of the message and toward the receiver of the message.

C. Early Uses and Gratifications Research

Though not always known by its present name, uses and gratifications type media research goes back as to the early 1940s in North America. This new direction of research has been interpreted as a reaction to two major theoretical strains in early mass communications research (McQuail and Windahl, 1982). The notion of recipient intentionality with respect to

the communicated message came in response to earlier behaviorist effects models which assumed that the communicator of the message used the medium to exact some discernable change (of behavior or of attitude) from the receiver. It also came in response to those theories of media content based on value loaded notions of cultural 'taste'. Such theories tended to denigrate the consumers of programming of what the proponents of the theory considered to be programming in poor taste (Carey and Kreiling, 1974). The elitist sensibilities in cultural tastes of academicians who researched the audience had to be set aside. The supposed value-neutrality of the uses and gratifications approach seemed a positive solution to the question of taste insofar as it deferred all aesthetic judgments to the eye of the individual audience members.

Researchers began to look at the gratifications obtained by audience members through their exposure to the mass media. In post Second World War North America, where radio technology had already become widely diffused, audience research concentrated largely on the study of the radio audience, but not with the same set of theoretical premises as early 'effects' research. Studies asked the question, not "what effect did listening to the radio have on audience?", but rather, "what do people enjoy about listening to it?" Herzog (1944) studied specifically the gratifications people obtained by listening to radio quiz programs and soap operas. Suchman (1942) looked at the reasons people gave for listening to music on the radio. Gratifications resulting from the use of other mass media products, such as from comics (Wolfe and Fiske, 1949), and from the newspaper (Berelson, 1949), also were examined.

Methodologically the emphasis turned away from experimental research designs and toward the self-report survey questionnaire. The statements elicited from the respondents were typically open-ended responses with the gratifications-obtained grouped later into meaningful general categories of use. Since these early gratifications studies lacked a coherent broad based statement regarding the theoretical assumptions of the position, they failed to

link obtained gratifications to their social and psychological origins (Katz et al., 1974). As a result, the investigations resulted merely in the recording of an exhaustive list of the possible functions of the media. One listened to the radio or read the newspaper to "get information for daily living", "to provide a framework for the day", "to get one's mind off things", or for any other number of reasons. But the net result was a set of findings that provided only descriptions of the orientation of the audience (Palmgreen et al., 1985). The question of what motivated people to do so was not linked theoretically to any specific general theories of behavior. What was lacking was a systematic basis upon which to interpret findings.

D. The Functionalist Gratifications Tradition

Two major factors contributed to the direction that gratifications type of research took in the 1960s. First, the growing disenchantment with the limited empirical support for the effects paradigm and for its simplistic theoretical behaviorist assumptions. Although earlier gratifications research reacted to effects research, work persisted in that paradigm of research for some time. Second, communications research began to flourish as the social sciences became more established in academic institutions in Europe and North America.

Providing an outline of the key terms to be employed in the newly explicit uses and gratifications perspective was Elihu Katz. He suggested that this new strain of research should devote

> ... less attention to what media do to people and more to what people do with the media. Such an approach assumes that even the most potent of mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no 'use' for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives. The 'uses' approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre potent and that people selectively 'fashion' what they see and hear to these interests." (Katz, 1959:2)

By this time, a more systematical theoretical account of individual uses and gratifications

became necessary and was found in functionalism.

Given the institutional emergence of functionalism as the dominant paradigm of research in social science departments in North America (see Gitlin, 1978), the theoretical premises for most uses and gratifications research tended to be either implicitly or explicitly functionalist. Media use was seen as a means of adjustment to, or reaction in, a system of connected personal relations in a wider context (McQuail, 1984a). Efforts were made to determine in what ways and to what extent individuals made use of the media with what outcome with respect to the maintenance of the individual.

Methodologically, the task was given to operationalizing the social and psychological variables presumed to give rise to differentiated patterns of media consumption. The survey questionnaire, usually of the closed-ended question variety, became the most popular form of data collection within the tradition. As a consequence, the common form of data analysis was that of statistical variable analysis. A significant stream of current uses and gratifications research still proceeds in this methodological vein.

In North America the dominance of Mertonian functionalism in communications research, particularly up to the 1970s, can not be understated. Although functionalism itself has various inflections, all versions essentially assert that society consists of interconnected and interdependent parts which contribute to the overall maintenance of the whole. Social systems evolve according to a homeostatic principle, which states that change comes about by way of the auto-regulatory function: systems adapt to changes in their environment. Therefore a functional analysis of the mass media is concerned with the consequences of media as they contribute to the maintenance of the individual personality or other complex systems. Merton's observation that societal institutions do not necessarily benefit all members equally led him to consider the possibilities of dysfunction in addition to function, for individuals and sub-groups as well as for institutions. Merton's theory of needs, however, was focused on the level of the individual. As a consequence subsequent functionalist research was

directed away from the relationship between the individual and various other social systems (Messaris, 1977).

By the 1970s a relatively coherent body of uses and gratifications research was identifiable by certain theoretical and methodological features. Blumler and Katz' 1974 collection of gratifications studies and critical essays on the subject entitled *The Uses of Mass Communications* represents a high point in the development of modern gratifications research and helped to make explicit the implicitly functionalist uses and gratifications research paradigm.

Broadly put, the uses and gratifications paradigm, or research tradition, "represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communications, among other resources in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals, and to do so by simply asking them" (Katz et al., 1974: 21). Katz et al. offer a seven-stage paradigmatic outline within which work in the field may be situated. In the model uses and gratifications research is concerned with 1) the social and psychological origins of 2) needs which generate 3) expectations of 4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to 5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in 6) need gratifications and 7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (1974:20). Gratifications research framed individuals as the units of analysis. Their personal needs motivated choices of media consumption which had positive and perhaps negative outcomes with respect to their individual development.

With respect to paradigms of media audience research, the potential for a bridge between the uses and gratifications perspective and the critical tradition of the study of popular culture was evident during the post-war period. During that time in the United States, with the post-war influx of critical scholars from the Frankfurt School, particularly to the New School of Social Research at Columbia University there were possibilities for synthesis and integration. Nonetheless, a number of factors mitigated against these

possibilities (Bennett, 1981). Despite this influx, the influence of Robert Merton and his version of functionalism tended to dominate the emerging generation of media scholarship in North America. As a result, convergences in theory in method for the most part were not found, and the cleavages between the social science and humanistic traditions of audience research widened. Social scientists became increasingly concerned about new forms of data collection involving largely quantitative designs and sophisticated forms of statistical analysis techniques. At the same time humanists searched for theory and method within the literary critical tradition (Carey and Kreiling, 1974; McQuail, 1984b).

E. British Cultural Studies

The origins of the British cultural studies approach to the study of popular culture can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century, to what has been called the 'culture and civilization' tradition. Its most important founding figure was Matthew Arnold whose writings articulated concerns that were to be echoed later by T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis among others. Historically the substantive focus of this tradition was the mass forms of popular culture associated with the development of industrial capitalism in Britain. Such new forms like the press and the cinema were grouped under the broad heading of mass culture and contrasted unfavorably with both the earlier forms of popular culture and with the exacting standards that the critics required of high culture. Politically, proponents of this tradition felt uneasy about the possible intersection of the development of mass culture with the political interests of the people. It was felt that the emerging mass culture was a threat to the existing social and political order (Bennett, 1981).

The 'culture and civilization' thesis remained in vogue up until the end of the Second World. Those who concerned themselves with questions of culture in this tradition carried on a discourse of the 'cultured' about the culture of those without 'culture'. They criticized mass forms of culture as the degenerative outgrowth of preexistent folk forms. The elitist

assumption of cultural decline directed at the popular culture of the masses was largely a reflection of the class of academics.

The expansion of higher education in Britain in addition to the change in the social composition of students and teachers created an environment in which popular culture could be analyzed by the same group of people. As Bennett points out, this has altered the entire tone of the debate on popular culture. Replacing the aloof and distant approach 'from above' has been a sense of liking for and, often, deep involvement with the cultural forms studied. In addition, the need to understand the effects of popular culture on those who have an affinity for it has displaced the need to condemn it because of what it does to 'other people'.

The theoretical references of the emergent 'cultural studies' approach have been extracted from contributions made in diverse disciplines. Besides the transition to the cultural studies from what has been referred to as 'culture and civilization' tradition, cultural studies has been influenced by the connection critical Marxist theory has made between culture and politics. The 'relative autonomy' of the cultural sphere has been adopted in cultural studies as opposed to the reductionist tendencies of earlier Marxist approaches to the study of culture.

Anxiety over mass culture was expressed from both left and right wing elitist positions. The conservative objection had at its roots a political concern over the maintenance of the social order. The political and cultural enfranchisement of the people, effected by the development of political democracy and the spread of literacy associated with the development of the popular press "had tended to undermine a supposedly natural distinction between the 'masses' and society's elites - political and cultural - with the result that cultural standards were lowered and political stability threatened" (Bennett, 1981:21). In contrast, but with the same negative pronouncement on poplar forms of culture, the left wing argued that working class "political and economic goals that could be realized within the capitalist system without challenging it, had been greatly facilitated by the 'culture industry'" (1981:22). By inoculating the masses against socialist ideals by entertaining them, popular culture failed to

rally the masses to revolution.

The influence of structuralism emerging from continental Europe has also been important in the formation of the cultural studies tradition in Europe. Of particular importance was the influence of structural linguistics in providing the foundation for a more systematic analysis of cultural forms (Morrow, 1989). The type of structuralism proving most influential to the development of cultural studies in Britain was inspired by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Analysis of culture from a structuralist perspective lay in determining the logic of the form produces the thoughts of the users. For de Saussure, the object of analysis was language. Other theorists analyzed different aspects of culture in an attempt at making explicit the logic of it.

Researchers working at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham have been responsible for interpreting cultural forms, including the mass media, from various sets of Marxist and structuralist assumptions. Media use can only be discerned in the set of social relations or context in which the use occurs. In the British cultural studies tradition societies are seen as divided along a number of dimensions (especially gender and class). Social relations are understood in terms of social power, in terms of a structure of domination that is never static but always the site of contestation and struggle. Media use is understood as part of the existing culture, and gives meaning to the social experience of media users themselves (Fiske, 1987b).

The tension in British cultural studies between the culturalist tradition and the structuralist traditions has been evident in recent times. The influence of the directorship of Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has been in the direction of incorporating continental forms of structuralism. As Morrow (1989) points out, however, the decline of the hard structuralist determinism of Althusserian structuralism has softened the tension between the 'two paradigms' tradition at the CCCS.

Up until recent years, the gaps between the functionalist uses and gratifications researchers and audience analysts from outside that tradition seemed unbridgeable. A renewed commitment, however, to cross-fertilization of different research approaches in the past decade has been in evidence. While much uses and gratifications continues within its own bounded problematic, recent audience research from those working within the British cultural studies tradition have attempted to bridge some of the gaps seperating social science and literary approaches. It has resulted in preliminary attempts at understanding audience experience of media with reference to non-functionalist theory, and with a degree of substantial empirical rigor. Examples of such research include studies conducted at the CCCS by Hobson (1980) on the viewing habits of housewifes, Brunsdon and Morley (1978) on audience interpretations of a national information program, and Morley (1986) on the context of viewing in British households.

F. Thesis Outline

This first introductory chapter has attempted to contextualize the traditions of research that are analyzed in some depth in Chapter II. It focuses upon the theoretical suppositions and issues surrounding various traditions of audience research. The key theoretical assumptions are outlined and briefly discussed. Chapter III contains an outline of the theory and methodology employed in the empirical component conducted as part of this thesis, in addition to a statement of the research objectives, a synopsis of the working hypotheses guiding the research, and an outline of the households interviewed. The analysis of the original interview data collected concerning the uses of television in the domestic setting of the project is conducted in Chapter IV. The concluding section of the paper contextualizes the contribution of the present research to developments in audience research within different schools of research.

II. Theoretical Issues in Audience Research

The theoretical terrain of uses and gratifications research is considerably dense. Despite attempts at simplifying the assumptions of the paradigm (eg. Katz et al., 1974), the theoretical complexities of the tradition remain. This chapter begins with an attempt to detail the debates concerning the connections in theory between various research traditions of the media audience. It attempts to outline the key assumptions of gratifications and cultural studies perspectives with respect to audience conception, audience needs, value assumptions, and methodology.

A. Functionalism and Uses and Gratifications

The relationship between uses and gratifications research and its theoretical foundations are a matter of ongoing debate. While some maintain that gratifications assumptions are mostly coextensive with those of functionalism (Rosengren and Windahl, 1972; Carey and Kreiling, 1974; Messaris, 1977), others assert that the approach is essentially atheoretical, and amenable to differing sets of theoretical assumptions (Elliott, 1974; McQuail and Guretvich, 1974; Blumler, 1979). Thus it is useful to outline briefly some important convergences and divergences of theoretical functionalism and uses and gratifications research.

Wright (1960) systematized Merton's functionalism into a set of hypotheses concerning the four functions of mass communication (information, correlation, cultural transmission, entertainment) for different social 'systems'. From this perspective, the media were seen to contribute in different ways to system stability. Society, individuals, culture, and sub-groups have certain requirements or needs that are fulfilled in different ways by the media.

While Wright's inventory included the functions of mass communications for the individual, it did not do so from the *perspective of the individual.* In traditional uses and gratifications research, the range of functions of the media are limited to those seen *by their*

audiences to fulfill felt social and psychological needs: people did not judge media use in terms of its consequences for society. Unlike as in Wright's formulation of functionalism, the notion of utility is central to that of function in the context of the receiver of mediated communication. The individual uses the media purposefully to achieve personal ends.

McQuail's (1984a) compilation of audience research in this vein finds four recurrent functions from the perspective of the receiver. First, media provides information for the individual, which satisfies curiosity and allows people to develop opinions and make decisions on practical matters. This has been the often reported function of the daily newspaper for example. A second function that the media has for the individual is its ability to develop and maintain one's personal identity, by allowing them to identify with valued others in the media to find reinforcement for personal values. Religious programming on various media is an example of one type of message that can help maintain the personal integration of the individual who identifies with the media individuals who project a set of commonly held beliefs. Third, it facilitates integration and social interaction, by providing a basis for interpersonal interaction, and by creating social empathy through insight into circumstances of others. For example, Lull (1980) found that mass media were valuable social resources which are particularly useful to the imaginative social member for the construction and maintenance of desired relations at home. The final function for the individual from their perspective that McQuail outlines relates to the entertainment function of the media. Entertainment allows the individual to either simply relax, or to escape from everyday problems. This is perhaps the most common type of usage mentioned by individuals with respect to their motivation for usage of television (McQuail, Blumler, and Brown, 1972).

Functionalism has been historically important in the development of mass communications research and continues to exert its influence. It has remained relevant and attractive for at least two reasons. First, for its ability to handle relations of causality or interdependence between behavioral phenomena, and second, because of the appropriateness

of functional terminology to questions of motivation and need satisfaction (McQuail and Guretvich, 1974).

Critics of functionalism have reproached it on a number of grounds. First, within the functionalist perspective the theory of media use does not address directly the nature of the mediated content itself. The failure to account for the nature of the symbolic content of the message in itself is seen as a form of obscurantism, which falls into the general history of the social sciences in its attempts to deal with artefacts and expressions that are essentially symbolic (Carey and Kreiling, 1974). A second objection holds that, though functions and dysfunctions are allowed for in functional analyses, dysfunctional aspects are in practice difficult to determine. Audience members are not likely to report media use in dysfunctional terms for example. There is a tendency to think that everything that exists (particularly over a period of time) is functional. Third, because there is no meaningful theory of change (functions lead to system stability, dysfunctions to instability and breakdown), criticism tends to be deflected away from existing power structures. The possibility of manipulation of the receiver by the producer is justified in the interests of system stability.

McLeod and Becker (1981), however, argue that the functionalist model does not lead inevitably to answering conservative questions. Others, in addition, assert that uses and gratifications is not bound to these suppositions of functionalism (and therefore the criticisms), or both. Blumler (1979), for example, argues that the theoretical roots of gratifications are eclectic. "There is no such thing as *the* [sic] uses and gratifications theory, although there are plenty of *theories* about uses and gratifications phenomena" (1979:11). For him, negative evaluations of uses and gratifications based on a critique of functionalism arise from the 'false expectation' that the approach is tied to a particular grand theoretical straightjacket (ie. functionalism). He goes further and maintains that this eclecticism is not a weakness, but a strength. The approach has empirical usefulness in any number of theoretical perspectives.

Uses and gratifications' unclear relationship with general theoretical frameworks resulted in a degree of ambiguity among researchers that has surfaced in the last two decades about its specific working assumptions. Katz et al. (1974) outline uses and gratifications' assumptions about the nature of the audience, the origins and fulfillment of needs, and about the value assumptions of the perspective.

These include the recognition of the audience as competent to report their own interests and motives in particular cases. In addition, the audience should be conceived as active and able to choose media interaction to some purposive end (gratification reception). Second, the media should be seen as competing with other sources of need satisfaction for the purpose of meeting social and psychological needs of audience members. The needs they fulfill cannot be divorced from existing social and psychological needs. Third, a value-neutral stance should be maintained relative to the producers of media content, and to the media fare itself.

McQuail and Guretvich (1974) argue that two alternative theoretical perspectives deriving from models of human behavior other than functionalism may be used to interpret gratifications research. The first of the alternative views that of the 'action/motivation' originates from Schutz's phenomenological sociology. From this perspective, concern lies with the individual actor, their choice of media behavior, and the meanings and expectations that they attach to their choices. Although some instances of media consumption may be the result of unconscious motivation, these are not suitable for analysis. Media consumption is described as a 'projected act', implying a certain degree of freedom of choice, and an orientation to the future.

The second interpretive framework, what the authors call the 'structural/culturalist' perspective, attempts to explain audience expectations and satisfactions derived from the media in terms of the patterns of media content that is made available, as well as the set of conventions, customs, and norms that define what counts as appropriate ways of using and reacting to media provision that prevail in particular societal settings. In this framework,

interpretation is focused on the ways that both of these are shaped by more general socio-structural factors. The recognition that media use does not take place in a social vacuum implies that the assumption of complete audience autonomy must be rejected. Instead, as Blumler et al. (1985) point out, social roles (both audience and institutional) constrain audience needs, opportunities, and choices. The parameters of gratification seeking behavior is restricted according to these social constraints.

A further set of constraints are imposed from the production side of media consumption. Elliott (1974) suggests that the uses and gratifications approach places media within the existing social structure. It is necessary to analyze forms of ownership, control and the production process to see which groups are directly represented and which are used as a source in the production of the output. Products of mass culture have 'uses' for the producers of the messages themselves. What these uses are, and how these interact with individual uses are problems raised from this perspective.

B. Audience Conception

In earlier mass society theories of media effects the audience was conceived as passive, unable to counteract the power of the message. Gratifications research turned the question "what do *media do* to people?" on its head and asked "what do *people do* with the media?". The assumption of audience activity implicit in the reformulation, though reconsidered recently, has long been considered a basic assumption of the approach. Activity implies that the audience member makes a conscious and motivated voluntaristic selection with respect to their experience of media content.

One objection made against the assumption of audience activity is that it tends to ignore the social context within which the individual makes choices in regards to media use. There does not appear to be any constraining influence of the context on patterns of choice available to the individual: each individual is presumed to be able to act according to some

unlimited range of choice. Essentially the assumption denies the temporal and spatial constraints to media use spread differentially across modern societies. Morley, for example, has been critical of the gratifications paradigm which is "essentially a psychologistic problematic, relying as it does on mental states, needs and processes abstracted from the social situation of the individuals concerned" (cited in Blumler, 1985:42).

McQuail (1984a) points out that audience activity should not be thought of as an either/or type assumption, but rather as a variable existing on a continuum. The concept of activity has to do with the extent to which and audience is selective, with the degree and kind of motivation that leads to media use, with how well audience members exert resistence to unwanted influences, and with the kind and amount of response which is made by media audiences. To the extent that media consumption is seen as a *nonactive* selection then it can not carry the meaning attributed it by the user. [1] Others (Carey and Kreiling, 1974; Swanson, 1977), in addition, condemn uses and gratifications for its failure to be consistent with its assumption of activity and failing to include in the concept of activity the notion of the perception process itself as active. As a result uses and gratifications has not sought to investigate how persons perceive and interpret the content of messages, and whether those interpretations do provide a link between needs, uses, and gratifications. Instead, gratifications research typically addresses every stage of the process but the perceptual activity of interpreting or creating meaning for messages.

These weaknesses led to a consideration of the dimensions of the audience activity concept as well as increased attention to the concept as a variable. Blumler (1979) argues that audience activity should not be regarded as a unitary entity. It is necessary, rather, to distinguish and dimensionalize some of the different senses in which audience members could

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[1]Measuring the extent of selectivity, however, may itself pose some problems. Given the fact that media use is typically described by audience members in functional (ie. 'problem solving' or 'need meeting') terms, the researcher is faced with the interpretive task about determining the extent of selectivity for a given audience member media interaction.

be active. His analysis of the concept of activity reveals at least four separable qualities. These are utility (mass communication has uses for people), intentionality (media consumption is directed by prior motivation), selectivity (media preference reflects prior interests and motivations), and imperviousness to influence (individual is resistant to effects of the message). According to Blumler, it is not enough to accept the notion of audience as active, researchers must consider the implications of these multiple dimensions, and concern themselves with operationalizing each of these qualities.

Levy and Windahl (1984; 1985) build upon the suggestion of Blumler (1979) that audience activity should be conceptualized as a variable. They argue that audiences exhibit varying degrees and kinds of activity in relation to their consumption of media. According to them, activity ranges qualitatively, according to the dimensions of quality (selectivity, involvement, and utility) and temporality (pre-, during, and postexposure), resulting in a nine-cell typology. Activity can then be measured quantitatively for each cell. This advance in conceptualization enables the researcher to reassess previously established causal relationships between motives and gratifications obtained. They suggest, moreover, that gratifications of certain kinds are most likely to be filled by, or associated with, certain kinds of audience activity.

Blumler's (1985) own development concerning the concept of audience activity relates to developing a notion of audience role. Maintaining that the audience member's relation to the mass media is shaped by the expectations of others, Blumler argues that social influences generate not only needs for media fulfillment, but they also transmit ideas about which gratifications may be satisfied through media use, the appropriate frequencies and manners of indulgence in media activity, the forms of content to be preferred and avoided, how to tune in certain media materials, and what we should expect to get out of them. Blumler argues, moreover, that communicators and audience members are linked by a network of mutually shared expectations. This means that the shape of the media messages themselves produced by

the communicators intimates appropriate ways of attending to them. In this way, mass media systems contain predefined options for relating to the communication experience. [2]

C. Audience Needs

Audience activity implies that media use is always the result of a process through which the individual purposefully links a felt need deprivation with some gratification (Katz et al., 1974). This implies first that individual needs are knowable to audience members themselves, and second that their behavior (media use) is directed at meeting the given need. Such a process of self-regulation is both conscious and purposive. Elliott (1974) describes the concept of need as the source of most of the difficulties to be found in uses and gratifications research in general.

The concept of activity ascribes a great deal of expertise on the audience member: they know what they want from the media, why they want it, and how to get it. In practice, however, the assumption still leaves the researcher with a good deal of interpretive work. Among the tasks of the uses and gratifications researcher has been the enumeration of needs felt and gratifications received as reported by audience members. Afterwards the task was to assemble them in some theoretically meaningful way so that they can be related to a more general theory of needs. Typically strategies focused on the derivation of needs from the set of reported gratifications. Reducing a complex of gratifications into the set of theoretically meaningful needs that necessitated them remains a difficult and unresolved problem. Katz et al. (1974) observe that attempts to attach media related needs or gratifications to some systematic theory of needs (eg. Maslow's need hierarchy) have proved largely unsuccessful.

Blumler (1979) maintains that a number of issues need to be resolved for this type of connection to be made successfully. First, typically social and psychological origins are

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[2]For example, intimated audience roles include those of 'fan', 'expert', 'voyeur', 'information-seeker' and so forth.

measured in crude demographic variables which belie the complexity of the concept. A second obstacle is that media needs are too often seen as arising from a unitary circumstance. Media use is likely to result from a complex set of circumstances. Third, in many cases the direct link between needs and gratifications ignore the processes (eg. motivation) through which gratifications are sought and ultimately obtained. The final problem that Blumler argues is that media use is sometimes reduced to fulfilling compensatory type needs to the exclusion of more positive needs. Consequently, the social and psychological roots of needs leading to media use and gratification reception have been considered apart from a systematic framework.

The experience of media, however, is not typically by isolated individuals, but as members of organized social groups and as participants in a cultural milieu. Accordingly, Palmgreen et al. (1985) suggest that many mediarelated needs and requirements of individuals spring from their location in and interaction with their social environment. Some empirical work attempts to connect media uses with their origins in societal structure and social processes. Katz et al.'s (1974) assessment of the possible social origins of felt problems, such as the creation of tension and conflicts, the formulation of values, and the creation of an awareness of personal and other problems, focus on types of needs that are likely to be fulfilled by different media. Blumler (1985) and Palmgreen et al. (1985) agree, nonetheless, that a clear understanding of the relationship between the social forces impelling people to use the media for the gratification of certain needs remains elusive.

Whatever the social or psychological roots of individual needs, media use has typically been conceptualized as a functional alternative to other more traditional forms of need fulfillment (Rosengren and Windahl, 1972; Katz et al, 1974; Cazeneuve, 1974; Elliott, 1974; Rubin and Rubin, 1985). Media is seen as an historically recent alternative among some given range of alternatives. The set of alternatives available to someone at any given point in time is constrained by individual differences, availability of media, and 'traditional' ways of need

fulfillment (Rosengren and Windahl, 1972). Media use as a functional alternative will appear most salient to the individual when the traditional means to need fulfillment are frustrated or removed (Elliott, 1974). For example, the need for social interaction in societies without mass media can be met through direct interaction in various social groups. In societies with mass media, interaction with the media may provide a functional alternative to (especially introverted) persons by providing them with a vicarious experience of social interaction with characters portrayed in the media.

Rubin and Rubin (1985) suggest, however, that there are limits to how far one can expect media to provide a suitable functional alternative to many human needs (eg. affection). Indeed, not all functional alternatives work equally well. They argue that some types of needs are fulfilled better by the media than other previous forms of fulfillment (eg. uncertainty reduction). Others, like Cazeneuve (1974), argue against the notion of functional alternatives. Although some needs may be intrinsic, other needs met through media usage may be themselves created through the very process of fulfillment. Thus, some needs fulfilled through media use are irreducible to pre-existent needs, but are provoked (and subsequently fulfilled) by the media itself.

The assumption of functional alternatives implicit in uses and gratifications shows little sensitivity to the substance of the media content itself. Although some research attempts to deal with gratifications received from general categories of content in some circumstances (eg. as entertainment, news, drama, sports, etc.), it has not been concerned for the most part with particular television shows. [3] This point has been all but overlooked in gratifications research where the assumption that content is relatively unrelated to function, that any mediated message can fulfill any need, seems to be common. A close examination of media content with respect to media use and gratification is for the most part absent from the

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[3]See Wenner's (1982) gratifications study of users of the television news documentary *60 Minutes* for an example of an exception within this tradition.

gratifications literature.

Another problem relevant to the implicit theory of needs in gratifications research has been the use of imprecise language. There is a good deal of confusion in the literature between the meaning of the terms function, use, gratification, motive, and need (Swanson, 1977). Although each concept is analytically separate, in practice there is a great deal of ambiguous usage. Consequently he calls for greater attention to precise usage of terminology in gratifications research.

Although gratifications research implies that gratifications obtained are the result of needs felt, it does not necessarily imply that needs cause gratifications directly. On the contrary, the individual conceptualized in the approach is not simply a passive instrument out of which needs pour and into which gratifications are sought and obtained. Gratifications research has generally failed to link motives (internal states of the individual) to preexistent needs and gratifications. More often it has tended to infer needs from things such as 'feelings', 'activities', and 'states of mind' (Elliott, 1974). These concepts must be operationalized separately or any found relationship between them is bound to be illusory. Failure to do tends to undermine the crucial assumption of audience member's need selfawareness, and denies that there is any conceptual distinction between motives, needs, and gratifications.

Within much audience research done in under the rubric of cultural studies, there has been more focus put on the needs of the sub-group which embraces the receiver of a mediated message. The social contexts of media use and consumption can have a determining impact on the types of uses made of specific mediated cultural products by specific social groups of people. Some authors report the uses of the television message by various subcultures. In these instances different subcultures incorporated meanings from the show that they use to produce a sense of subcultural identity. For example, Schiff (1985) accounts for the popularity of the television show *Dynasty* amongst gays the United States by making reference

to the subculturally specific meanings made by them. He argues that they interpreted the character of Alexis (played by Joan Collins), not as the apotheosis of the sexuality of the older woman, but rather as the destroyer of sexual differences. In this way she aggressively denies traditional distinctions between masculinity and femininity, and her incorporation of what are normally considered to be masculine traits into a feminine body produces an inversion of the male gay that is equally subversive. Similarly Hobson (1982) shows how the television drama *Crossroads* provides working class women with a source of cultural capital that they used to maintain a sense of identity. Fiske (1987a) reports how some Australian schoolchildren modify and incorporate commercial messages into their own play at school. In these ways, television (and by inference other media) can be used in the context of the subculture as the provider of the raw material with which the subculturally specific meanings are constructed.

Subcultural resistance results in the 'pleasure' of the sub-ordinate group to articulate their peculiar concerns and identities through the meanings they generate from media messages. This acquisition of group specific and relevant meanings by the members of the group is an acquisition of 'cultural capital' which can be used as a source of empowerment to the individual and to the group in their opposition to the dominant culture.

D. Value Assumptions

Uses and gratifications assumes that an audience member can manipulate any given media product for the satisfaction of a wide range of needs. Assuming that audience members use products of mass communication for their own purposes makes a direct analysis of cultural products themselves needless. By endowing activity to the receiver of communicated messages, moreover, the emphasis shifts away from the possibility that the sender of messages could be acting in a purposeful manner toward the achievement of (corporate) goals which may not coincide with the interests of audience members. Thus, the claim to value-neutrality

(Katz et al., 1974; Elliott, 1974) ignores the possible hegemonic function of media corporations whose messages serve a specific set of interests. By abstracting conclusions about the mass communication process from culture and social structure, the problems associated with the differential distribution of power and opportunity in society tend to be ignored. This suggests that the approach is therefore fundamentally conservative and inherently supportive of the status quo.

McQuail (1984b) objects to the utilitarian and behavioristic assumption underlying gratifications research in which cultural 'behavior' is treated as both determined and instrumental and rarely as 'consummatory' or as an 'end-in-itself'. The meaning of cultural product of consumption as derived from statements by individuals is regarded as a poor substitute for an "overall view in which the ritual nature of culture is recognized along with its great diversity of meanings" (1984b:182). Thus, from a cultural point of view there seems to be no recognition of any kind of aesthetic theory. In this context Fiske (1987a) summarizes various psychoanalytic theories of pleasure associated with Barthes, Lacan, Freud, and others. Here the activity of watching television is seen as intrinsically rewarding and not as a means to an end. He argues that the pleasure of watching television contains elements belonging to social, physical and psychoanalytic categories; it can not simply be reduced to some sort of means-end analysis. He supports these theories using examples to illustrate how pleasures associated with watching television and film do not necessarily involve some notion of intentional behavior.

E. Methodology

Some developments in methodological issues have centered on responding to the challenges presented by an increasingly complex media saturated society. In response to the advent of new communications technologies (eg. VCRs, cable television, new telephone services, home computers), research conducted by Williams, Phillips, and Lam (1985) sets

forth the beginnings of a framework for research in this area. These authors envision an accommodation of the uses and gratifications model (which is a model concerned with the mass communicated message), to the study of technologies that may affect the structure of communication in society and make available a greater range of choices that would contribute to the satisfaction of needs.

Some issues center on problems associated with the operationalization of appropriate variables in the research area and necessitates a rethinking of appropriate procedures for analyzing the data. For example, Rosengren (1983) suggests that new analytical statistical techniques, such as LISREL (Linear Structural Relations), help to overcome the criticism that gratifications research does not take into account structural variables, such as social class. In like manner, Palmgreen et al. (1985) suggest that what is needed are studies that test large multivariate models that specify the complex relationships between these variables in an a priori fashion.

Other research has focused on the possibilities of refining existing empirical quantitative methodologies in the pursuit of resolving operational problems. Becker (1979) notes the problem of measuring the gratifications audience members seek from the media, and delineates strategies to cope with the inherent difficulties of measurement in gratifications research. As a partial critique of the prevalent use of the survey questionnaire in the tradition, Zillman (1985) suggests the possibility for conducting an experimental design for the purpose of incorporating its findings with data collected by means of the survey questionnaire.

Still other research has called into question the standard method of data collection used in gratifications research, that of the self-report questionnaire. Messaris (1977) notes three types of bias associated with mass communications research (including uses and gratifications) that relies on self-report questionnaires. His first objection is that such a methodological instrument encourages the respondent to treat their media exposure as if it

were the result of deliberate choice. Media use which is the result of habit or social conditioning is unrecognized as such because the methodology itself tends to hide explanations of behavior which are incorrect interpretations or *ex-post facto rationalizations of behavior*, and not the outcome of deliberate, goal-oriented choice. Carey and Krieling (1974) concur with this criticism maintaining that selfreports of motivation for consumption and behavior with respect to television use can not be taken at face value since self-reports are "simply words accepted as reasonable and plausible descriptions and explanations for behavior in some universe of discourse" (1974:244). A second criticism of the survey questionnaire is that such research tends to focus on *measuring limited and short-run consequences* of media exposure. Attitudes and behaviors measured at a single point it time are not likely to illuminate the more enduring, but less obvious, consequences of cumulative exposure. Finally, the assumption that media users are aware of the consequences of viewing, listening, and reading is likely to lead to *uncritical acceptance*, on the part of the researcher, of respondents' statements based on invalid stereotypes rather than on responsible self-analysis. The methodology employed demands from the respondent a degree of analytical ability and awareness that many are unlikely to have. The respondent draws upon conventional, stereotypical, and invalid beliefs about media use.

These criticisms directed at the logic of self-report methodology imply that new methodological options must be examined if the approach is to escape the inherent assortment of biases associated with it. While the existing methodologies common to gratifications research coincide with functionalist assumptions, alternative strategies would allow the framing of uses and gratifications questions in theoretical contexts other than functionalism.

McQuail (1984a) is critical of the narrow way in which the methodology in the uses and gratifications research organizes the work in the field (Rosengren, 1974; Palmgreen et al., 1985). He argues that the gratifications approach itself actually can be made more flexible to provide an alternate framework for looking at media in a wider social and cultural context. In

order to do so, however, there needs to be a turning away from methods that submit to the "evergrowing machine of datacollection and elaborate statistical analysis of numbers formed from much less substantial qualities" (1984:185), and toward more qualitative procedures.

In recent years ethnographic methodologies have become more acceptable as valid alternative methods for studying television and its viewers. Ethnographic studies may take the observational form as in the studies conducted by Hobson (1980) on the ways that women integrated their television viewing habits into their domestic lives. The methodology employed by Morley (1986) concentrates upon the viewer's verbalizations of their responses to television via a semi-structured interview technique. This method allows the researcher to overcome some of the limitations and biases associated with the self-report questionnaire by allowing the researcher/interviewer the discretion to evaluate an individuals' behavior, or individuals' self-evaluation of their behavior, within some identifiable social context.

Qualitative audience research serves to show how various findings would have gone unseen if approached by some other (ie. self-administered questionnaire) method alone. Lull points out that the strength of qualitative methods in audience research can "establish an authentic framework for interpreting audience members interpretations and uses of media in a way that vigorously and precisely positions the data in a referential context" (1987:320-321). Recent calls for research employing such methods have been plentiful, yet have remained largely unheeded. Lull (1987) suggests that as a result there has been a relative absence of qualitative audience studies. There remains less need for repeated calls for research, and more research itself.

III. Television in the Domestic Setting

The fundamental critique applied by a cultural studies perspective on gratifications research is directed at the problem of extracting the individual from the media consumption context. This has clear and direct implications for audience centered studies. Thus audience centered studies focusing on the domestic medium of television can be usefully informed by models in which the context is accounted for theoretically.

The present empirical audience research, like the family interviews conducted by Morley (1986) on which the present empirical research is modeled, relies on theoretical models developed in family studies. The following sub-section outlines these lines of argument. Subsequent subsections link the theoretical argument to the Morley's research as a preface to the outline of the empirical project conducted as part of this thesis.

A. The Family Context of Media Use

Goodman (1983) offers a family systems perspective to the analysis of media use within the family. Her work is foundational for any study of the television audience as it accounts for a seemingly individual behavior (eg. watching television) in a complex social context. Her perspective has three components: family structure, family development, and family adaptation. [4] It provides a framework for delineating the variety of uses that television can have within the context of the domestic setting.

Family structure consists of an invisible set of demands that organizes the ways in which family members interact. Within the family numerous dyadic and other subsystems exist (eg. generational, age, sex) which are sustained by numerous separate functional

[4]Although in many cases the use of the term 'family' instead of 'household' does not pose a problem (where the immediate family comprises the household) analyses of family can extend beyond the household itself. The context of viewing, and of primary socialization, is always that of the household. In the context of a theoretical framework that Goodman outlines, the distinction is functionally unimportant.

interests. In this context the television can be used in several ways by individuals in the household. It may be seen as a controlling mechanism, where the man of the house can have his power as head of the household ritually observed through control of the channel changer. It may be used by some to reward or punish certain behaviors of the parents over the children, or between adults or siblings. It may also be used to build alliances, through the sharing of common televisually mediated experiences, with others in the house with whom open communication is otherwise difficult. The uses for requirements of the competing subsystems in the family are formed in numerous ways, and in modern western societies, ways that often include television.

Families are not static entities. Families endure and change over the course of their life-cycle. During specific phases of the life-cycle the needs and interests of family members shift and new family dynamics constantly emerge. Goodman acknowledges that television use in the household is likely to take on certain predictable forms at certain times, depending on the functional requirements of the system. Rules and boundaries that exist at one time become transformed over time. Television may be used as a baby-sitter by adults in a household to keep the children out of their way when the children are young. When children get older and are able to take care of themselves to a greater extent, the babysitting function is no longer necessary.

Families also must adapt to a changing environment so as to maintain continuity and enhance the psycho-social growth of its members. Pressures and stresses introduced into the family either from within or without necessitates that the family must negotiate transitions of a developmental nature. During points of transition, conflicts involving television and television use may arise that need to be resolved. A transition point may be invoked by the personal stress associated with the some significant event such as the loss of employment. The result may be a use of television designed specifically at avoiding interaction with other family members. Alternately, peer group membership may be facilitated by the watching of certain

types of television not in accordance with family values resulting in conflicts of various kinds within the home. Events outside the family impact directly on the entire family, and the ways to cope with these transitions often involve the television.

B. *Family Television*

Building largely on the theoretical framework of Goodman (1983), Brody and Stoneman (1983), and others, Morley's (1986) research entitled *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* represents an empirical attempt to frame the active individual's uses of television within the context of the set of domestic family relationships. In so doing Morley attempts to make the dynamic unit of analysis the family (or household) itself. Patterns of television use have to be interpreted from the social situation underlying it. Individuals of the audience are conceptualized as subjects whose use of television is guided by a series of choices about what and when to view contingent upon their family situation. Thus, whatever the individual's placement within the family power structure, their uses of television are inevitably inflected by their situation within the politics of the family. Factors affecting household structure and composition (eg. of varying socioeconomic class, household size, parental configuration, ethnicity, role orientations, and gender relations) must considered in any analysis of the role that television plays in the domestic setting.

In the spring of 1985, and under the direction of Morley, eighteen families were interviewed in their own homes. The families were drawn from a relatively small geographical region in the South London area in Britain. All of the households were comprised of two adults living together and at least two dependents up to the age of eighteen. In addition, all the families were white. The similarity of characteristics allowed for the comparative analysis between families with respect to different social positions and families with children at different ages.

Households were differentiated by Morley according to class affiliation. The actual differentiation, however, between the class standing of the households in his sample is quite limited (ie. there is a high proportion of working-class/lower-middle class households). Although intending to pursue class based issues in the analysis, ultimately the failure to draw a more differentiated sample prevented Morley from successfully carrying this out.

Although initially the complete interviews were to be conducted with the whole family present at the same time, Morley encountered difficulty in sustaining the interest of the younger members of the family. Consequently only occasionally would older children in the family be included in the entire interview. Morley then moved his interview of the children in the sample to the end of the initial interview with the parents, minimizing the extent of their involvement. An accomodation of this feature of a certain segment of the sample resulted in the shifting of focus of analysis. Children's views and comments were much more marginal to the analysis than was originally intended. Thus the opportunity to actively pursue family dynamics was less than it intended to be.

The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were taped with audio cassette and later transcribed for analysis. Although Morley does not include the complete transcriptions of the interviews in his book, in one chapter he does give a relatively detailed interpretation with respect to patterns of media use for each of the households interviewed in his study.

Morley's research was designed to investigate, in terms of the differences between families in different social positions and between families with children of different ages:

> a) the increasingly varied uses of the household television set(s) - for receiving broadcast television, video games, teletext; etc.;
> b) patterns of differential 'commitment' and response to particular types of programming;
> c) the dynamics of television use within the family: how viewing choices are expressed and negotiated within the family; the differential power of particular family members in relation to viewing choices at different times during the day; the ways in which television material is discussed within the family;

> d) the relations between television watching and other dimensions of family life: television as a source of information on leisure choices; leisure interests and work obligations (both inside and outside the home) as determinants of viewing choices. (1986:50)

The central aim of the interviews in Morley's research was not merely to define the uses of television in the terms used by the family members, but also to produce "some insights into the criteria lying behind (and generating) particular responses and viewing choices" (1986:51). Moreover, Morley sought to address, even although only in a preliminary way, how the viewing context affects the nature of the interpretation of television content.

Morley's systematic analysis of the data with respect to the general themes discussed in the theoretical section is limited basically to the consideration of several gender-related themes. Among the themes he examines are power and control over program choice, viewing style, amount of viewing, television related talk, and program type preference. He analyzes each of these themes in the context of liberal verbatim quotations that he presents as representative of the sample as a whole.

Power and control over program choice was found to exist largely within the domain of the males in Morley's sample. He reports that in a number of families it was evident that in cases where disputes existed over viewing choices, the adult males in the house would exercise their authority and impose their personal program preference on other family members. Moreover, males were typically reported as having possession of the channel changer. In those households where males were unemployed and their female counterparts worked outside the home, however, gendered power over program selection did not appear to hold. According to Morley, this finding indicates that the typically male position of power in this respect has at its base not the biological fact of being male but rather "on a social definition of a masculinity of which employment (that is, the 'breadwinner role') is a necessary and constitutive part" (1986:150). Consequently, when the 'traditional' pattern is

not met, the whole pattern of power relations within the domestic setting is subject to change.

Morley also found consistent evidence to support the initial hypothesis that there were gendered differences with respect to style of viewing. He found that women in the sample tended to report their viewing as a fundamentally social activity, which in many cases involves interaction with others, and often includes the simultaneous performance of domestic work. In contrast, men were found to state a clear preference to wanting to watch attentively and without interruption. Morley traces these differences to the differential positioning of the men and women in his sample with respect to the home environment. Women (especially those who do not work outside the home), for whom the home was a primary site of domestic obligations, appeared reluctant to engage in extended attentive viewing fearing that it would be "an indefensible waste of time".

The study also found conflicting evidence with respect to amount of viewing. Morley found in his sample that women tended to watch more than the men. He explains that this finding is largely due to the fact that the women in his sample, who did not work outside the home, were simply at home more. Typically these women would have the television on during the day but only attend to it sporadically. Their viewing totals tend to include much viewing which was found to be qualitatively different from male viewing which, as mentioned above, tended to be more attentive and immersed. As a consequence the women in the sample actually tended to report less of an affinity to the medium itself than did men although they may have reported slightly higher viewing totals.

Women and men in Morley's sample also displayed a differential tendency to talk about television related topics with others outside of the home. More women than men reported openly that they talked with their friends about television. To the extent that men did talk about television with others outside the home, Morley found that they tended to talk about sports. Morley admits to the possibility of the unreliability of the accounts offered by his male respondents suggesting that they may be a "misrepresentation of their actual

behaviour, based on their anxiety about admitting to watching fictional programs" (1986:157). Whether such was found to be the case or not, their reticence to report talking about television indicates a significant gender difference in viewing experience. As the meanings of television are made in and through the social processes of subsequent discussion and 'digestion' of the viewed material, the differences in the consumption practices of men and women become apparent.

Morley's examination of program type preference revealed a notable consistency between the preferences of men and women. In most cases the men in the sample conformed to the 'masculine' programs of preference which tended to be news and other factual programming, and sports. In contrast, the women tended to express preference in fictional shows. Where there were exceptions to this finding in the sample (eg. where the women expresses preference for 'factual' programming), Morley suggests that educational background, which puts the individual "in the dominant position in terms of cultural capital", is effective in influencing the types of shows that are available for individuals to prefer. Thus, in one family in the sample where the women was a college student and her husband a caretaker with relatively little formal education, the pattern of typical 'gendered' preferences was reversed.

In addition to these five themes, Morley examines six others with respect to gender issues. Specifically he looked at the extent of planned and unplanned viewing, the patterns and usages of the video recorder, the practice of 'solo' viewing and the pleasures associated with that (particularly 'guilty' pleasures experienced by women), the patterns of channel and comedy preferences, and the preference of national versus local news programming. These themes covered in Morley's analysis are not detailed here as they are not themes specifically taken up in the present empirical research.

Morley examines the presence of the gender-related themes he examines across the social class breakdown. Some themes were found to be positively related to class while others

were negatively related. Nonetheless, the real value of the analysis was to "generate hypotheses about the relation of gender and class (and the effectivity of both) which could usefully be tested in further work with a ... more differentiated sample of respondents" (1986:173).

In total, Morley's work in Family Television demonstrates how the micro-political dimensions of family life intersect with the presumably individual act of watching television. Morley observes that people who live in families do not always get to choose freely what and when they want to watch because others in the household are given 'preference'. Often they have to let others in the household watch what they want to watch instead. When these situations arise the implicit rules of authority in the household take form in concrete actions. The dimension of power within the family, and particularly power which is divided according to gender lines, are made explicit in the 'television room'. Whenever children are told that they are 'too young' to watch a certain show, whenever household individuals are too involved making supper to watch their favorite afternoon television program, or whenever families organize and conduct weekend 'family video nights', the dynamics of the family are at once made explicit and reinforced. The television then can be seen as integral to the 'functioning' of the family unit. As Morley insists, viewing television has to be seen as a constituent part of the "familial or domestic relations through which we construct our lives" (1986:9).

That observation is no less true for Canadian households (and therefore audiences) than for British ones. The present study attempts to contextualize how the organization of television within the family relates to the broader questions of how power is allocated with the domestic situation. It attempts to link how choices about what and when to view, who controls the remote, and so forth, relate to family processes. Both Morley's research and the present work can be seen to fit within the rubric of the cultural studies approach insofar as they attempt to link these issues relating to relationships of power with patterns of media use.

C. Research in Brief

The present empirical project attempts to replicate in part the methodological approach taken in the study on the uses of television in British households conducted by Morley (1986) which is detailed in the preceding section. It attempts to examine several of the gender-related themes taken up by Morley's analysis. In addition, some other issues relating to parent-child relations and subcultural media uses raised in Morley's theoretical section and elsewhere will be examined. In doing so it will contribute to the literature of qualitative audience research which, particularly in North America, has been neglected in this area.

Nine households were selected for in-depth interview. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing the researcher to cover certain general areas with respect to television use in the household which were to provide data relevant to the examination of the initially stated hypotheses. Interview and questionnaire data that were received are analyzed to examine the specific the ways in which the influences of subcultures, gender, and parent-child relationships interact to produce differential uses of television for individuals situated in different social and cultural positions within the domestic setting.

The following sections outline the objectives of the research, lay out the methodology and sampling design for the study, set out a number of working hypotheses, and analyze the hypotheses using the information obtained in the study. In the following sections the present research will be outlined with reference to the Morley's research so that the points of replication are made explicit.

D. Research Objectives

This empirical component of the thesis attempts to address some of the methodological and theoretical criticisms levelled against traditional uses and gratifications research by employing a qualitative approach to the study of media uses. Like Morley's research, the present empirical offering in this way attempts to extend the range of the

tradition of research that are drawn upon.

Specifically, the main objective of the present research (and that of Morley's as well) is to explore how the context of media use frames and gives meaning to the ways in which individuals 'use' the medium of television in their everyday lives. Morley's research was intended to be a continuation of his earlier research relating to the interpretations of media messages that audience members make (eg. Brunsdon and Morley's *Everyday Television: Nationwide,* for example). He wanted to consider the ways in which the interpretation of television messages were inflected according to both the context of their consumption and the social situation of individuals. In the thesis study, the objectives are limited to examining the specifically social uses of television in the domestic context. To this end a number of working hypotheses related to the uses of television in the family have been outlined. It will embrace the question of how power is differentially distributed and exercised through the use of television by individuals in the family.

The partial use of Morley's research as a model for the research undertaken in this thesis implies that an attempt should be made to report on the findings insofar as they are comparable. This is also an objective of the present research. Although certain obstacles exist which make direct comparison between the samples impossible (eg. national differences, methodological dissimilarities, etc.), the possibility for comparative analysis nonetheless exists. Where appropriate, comparative remarks will be made. Indeed the logic of the notion of replicability (abstracting findings from one context and comparing them with another) is more germane to positivist research than the present interpretive project. Therefore the purpose of replicating Morley's research methods, even if only in part, was to test several of his hypotheses on a quite different sample of individuals. The present research intends to see, not especially how the Canadian sample compared with the British, but more what the character of the Canadian sample is by itself. Nonetheless, qualified and tentative comparisons with the British sample appear scattered throughout the results section.

E. Working Hypotheses

The theoretical analysis for this research involves focus on three main themes: subcultural systems, gender relations, and parent-child relations with respect to television use. Table 1 contains a summary of the hypotheses.

Table 1: Working Hypotheses

Subculture and Television Use

1. Television is an important resource for subcultural interaction.
2. Differential subculturally salient television programming provides the potential for intrafamily conflict.

Gender and Television

1. Differential positioning of males and females within the family will produce gender specific 'styles' of viewing.
2. Women will tend to watch less television than men.
3. Programming preferences will tend to be gender specific and will facilitate same-sex and same-family position relations within the family.

Parent-Child Relationships and Television

1. Television will be used as a tool for social control in the family.
2. Mother will assume an overseer role in relation to the viewing of television by children, while fathers will assume the role of playmate.

For each general theme there will be working hypotheses, which the research will set out to both resolve and modify by means of an examination of the data. In this section, the intention is not to rigidly set forth hypotheses to test in typical hypothetical-deductive fashion. Rather, the hypotheses function as a sensitizing guide for the researcher in the interview stage. Reformulations of and modifications to the hypotheses by the researcher are possible and allowable during the collection and the analysis of the data in this qualitative method. As already mentioned, several of these guiding hypotheses are taken from Morley's study. The remainder are taken from various other sources. These hypotheses are outlined

briefly below.

Subcultural Television Use

First, as several authors mention (Elliott, 1974; Lull, 1980; Goodman, 1983; Fiske, 1987a) television may be used by family members for the purpose of acquiring cultural material that allows them to maintain relationships with groups outside the house. Such media use is guided less by gratifications received directly from exposure to the television itself and more from the gratifications received by the maintenance of subcultural affiliation. For working adults, television can provide a common referent for conversational topics at the workplace. Cultural competence achieved by having watched a certain television program is likely to be no less important for both young children and adolescents within their peer groups. To be completely without competence in this regard is to jeopardize one's status in the group and thereby risk being labeled as 'out of it' by the group in question.

Second, conflicts of various sorts are likely to be exacerbated around the television set because of the salience of different shows to different members in the family. As Goodman (1983) suggests, conflicts may arise not only because of differing tastes in content (subculturally specific 'tastes') which may be denigrated by one family member and embraced by another, but conflicts associated with the simultaneous broadcasting of the shows may arise.

Gendered Television Use

According to Morley (1986), differential positioning of the sexes in relation to the home environment produces different 'styles' of television viewing. Those who work outside the home will regard the domestic setting as the primary site for leisure activities. Conversely, those who do not work outside the home will tend to regard the domestic sphere as a worksite. Insofar as societies are characterized by a dominance of the labour market by men,

this division between the definition of the domestic sphere coincides with gender differences. Morley's sample is characterized by this division. But with increasing numbers of women entering the labour force, this simple gendered classification becomes increasingly untenable. The question is whether or not the positioning of women in the workplace has changed the division of domestic labour responsibilities. As it still remains likely that it is the woman who is most likely to feel responsible to see that these tasks get done. Thus the home setting for her is ambiguous: it is at once the site of leisure and responsibility. Her television viewing is more likely to be structured around these tasks and to be constrained by them. [5] Insofar as families exhibit an egalitarian orientation with regard to domestic roles, perceptions of the domestic sphere as leisure-work site will not be gender specific. Conversely, in families where there is a traditional orientation to family roles and spheres of domestic responsibility, the home will be perceived differentially according to gender differences.

The second hypothesis also follows from Morley's findings. While nonworking women are more likely to watch more television than working men (as in Morley's sample where most of the women did not work to the same extent outside the home), working women are likely to watch less in total precisely because their domestic duties lessen the amount of leisure time available to them on a regular basis. Again, this tendency should be lessened by the extent to which families are structured according to egalitarian orientations.

Third, program preferences are also likely to be in part gender specific. Morley (1986) suggests that males have a tendency to prefer shows that depict either realism or activity, or both (esp. in the case of televised sports), while females tend to enjoy fiction and romance, or both (esp. as in the soap opera). While this may reflect the tastes of the people in his

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[5]For example, Hobson's (1982) research of families who watched the early evening soap opera *Crossroads* found that the women did watch the show but in a different manner than the rest of the family. Because tea time coincided with the show, the woman had to occupy her role as servant, and serve the family tea. Her "viewing" consisted of either listening from the kitchen to the television in the living room, or watching a small black and white television in the kitchen that had been placed there specifically for the purpose of accommodating such tasks.

sample of male-earner working class families, preferences in programming along gender lines may not be as clear-cut in other kinds of households. The present research will be concerned not only with drawing out the types of preferences that exist, but it will also seek to determine what impact these preferences make on family relationships.

Parent-Child Relations and Television Use

Access to the television for children may be contingent upon their meeting certain expectations imposed by household authorities. In this context adults in the family use the television as a form of social control; as a reward or punishment in relation to whether they judge the children's specific or general behavior as appropriate (Goodman, 1983; Brody and Stoneman, 1983).

The contrasting relationship of mother and father to their children during television watching implies a second working hypothesis. Brody and Stoneman (1983) suggest that, in the context of family viewing, mothers often assume the 'overseer' role in relation to their children while fathers will tend to take on the 'playmate' role. Accordingly, it is frequently only the mother who tends to exert any sort of supervisory role in relation to programming. Overall, however, actual mediation of television content by parents to kids is likely to be lower than is commonly reported (Bryce and Leichter, 1983) since it is likely to be restricted to programs which have a high salience for both. It may be, consequently, more likely for parents not to watch with their children than to watch and oversee or play around with them.

F. Research Design

The following section details the methodological design of the present qualitative research. It will outline briefly the sampling design and technique as well as the interview and data analysis methods. Although the present study attempts to replicate the methodology employed in Morley's (1986) study, divergences from that model for various reasons have

been necessary. Where these divergences appear will be made explicit in this section. Their impact upon the study as a whole will be examined in brief.

The Theoretical Sample

The exploratory audience study conducted as part of this thesis uses a qualitative methodology in which household members, from a total of nine households are interviewed (see Appendix for household summaries). Although fewer families are surveyed in the present research (Morley's study samples 18 families) the exclusion criteria per household is approximately the same. Some of the households selected in the present project, however, were ones where there was only one dependent. Further, the homes of the participants were not geographically restricted as in Morley's sample. They represented several different neighbourhoods in the city of Edmonton.

Where the sample size is relatively small the logic of this sort of qualitative audience research entails that the sample be constructed theoretically to eliminate potential confounding variables. As a consequence the sample to be selected is not be representative of the household composition of the population as a whole. [6] Table 2 contains the list of criteria for exclusion of certain types of households from the selected sample.

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[6]According to the 1989 All Alberta Survey, 45.7% of households in Edmonton consist of 3 or more current residents. Of those households, 27.3% fit the exclusion criteria as set forth above (not including spouse/common-law partner ethnic identity, and media related criteria variables, which were absent in the data set). In total, the "ideal" households selected for represent about 12.5% of sample Edmonton households (54 out of 433), but about 19.5% of the sample of Edmonton residents (228 out of 1172). Given that the acceptable households as defined above exist for only short periods of time, a much greater percentage of Edmontonians are likely to live in that sort of domestic situation at some point in their lives.

Table 2: Exclusion Criteria per Household

single person
single parent
child absent
ethnic (immigrant)
sectarian religious affiliation
no television sets, more than 3 television sets
low total family viewing patterns

First, because the key object of analysis is the set of inter-relationships between family members with respect to the use of television, it is necessary to exclude not only single person households, but also child absent, and single parent families. The exclusion of the these groups is necessary due to the relative lack of a complex set of inter-relationships between family members. Nonetheless, because of the high number of households in Canadian society that do not fit the 'ideal' types listed above, examinations of the power relations relative to television use in these excluded households (at least for those households with more than one family member) would be a useful supplement to the proposed research.

Households that are comprised of recent immigrants or some identifiable ethnic group are excluded because the influence of their peculiar set of cultural beliefs and practices would make conclusions about differences problematic. While the uses of television by recent immigrants and ethnic minorities would also prove interesting, the inclusion of such households in the sample would come at the peril of the proposed analysis. For the same reason, households in which there is a sectarian religious affiliation are excluded. Their sets of beliefs, which by definition stand against society with a degree of tension, may tend to confound the primary intentions of the research.

Finally, the last two criteria, regarding television sets and consumption totals, ensure that the families engage interactively in situations involving television on a regular basis. On the one hand we clearly must exclude those families where there is no television or where television is rarely watched. On the other, in households where high levels of television are

viewed by members but where there exist several operable television sets there may be *fewer* television relevant interactions.

Sample Selection

When selecting an appropriate sample size for a 'qualitative' study, the sample is of a sufficient quantity to discern deviant cases. When recurrent patterns become discernable in the data, this should tell the researcher that deviant cases are becoming increasingly unlikely. For the present research, the sample has been limited to a size of nine households because of the recognizable recurring features found. Conclusions drawn from the analysis of these households are thus not likely to reflect the idiosyncrasies of peculiar families.

Given the relatively select nature of the sample, a modified 'snowball' sampling technique was used. Households were recruited directly by the researcher from his previous knowledge, from referrals from participating household members and from referrals by persons known to the researcher. Initial contact with members of households involved a brief questionnaire about household characteristics relating to the exclusion criteria outlined above ensured that households were suitable according to the theoretical sample before an interview appointment was made. Although none of the respondents to this screening questionnaire were of households inappropriate for interviews, interviews would have been scheduled and conducted nonetheless. Respondents expressing an interest in cooperating with the interview were given an informational letter that briefly describes the research project, the interview procedure and questionnaires, and some details about confidentiality and anonymity.

A sample selected using snowball-type selection procedures is subject to the criticism of a lack of sample independence. In this study however, the benefits of selecting an independent sample are not likely to outweigh the costs in time and effort necessary in ensuring it. Considering that the sample of households obtained for the study compared favorably with a larger sample of Edmonton households on a number of dimensions suggests

that the sample used in this study is not skewed in ways that are discernable.

Family Role Orientation

Obtaining a household sample differentiated according to class is more difficult in countries like Canada particularly when compared to societies like Britain. Typically there is such a wide subjective evaluation of the middle-class in Canada that to meaningfully conduct a class analysis has considerable obstacles. Consequently an attempt was made to draw a sample that was differentiated according to the concept of familial role orientation (egalitarian vs. traditional). Because social class differences alone are not as acute in Canada as they are in other industrialized countries, observed differences between classes may be uninterestingly small. Internal family structure is likely to vary with social class (eg. working class families are more likely to be structured patriarchally) yet is conceptually distinct (Dyer, 1979).

Familial role orientation will be defined according a composite of questions appearing in the adult questionnaires defining the extent to which families are characterized by equalitarian social relations based on the distinction developed by Dyer (1979). The introduction of familial role orientation will allow the analysis of family structure with respect to television use. Such a differentiation of households is a feature lacking in Morley's (1986) research.

Interview Method

As in all empirical research, there should be an affinity between the type of theory and method used. In audience research in the North American traditions of research, a heavy emphasis has been place on highly structured methodologies (eg. interview questionnaires, experimental designs) which are germane to the investigation of the objects of their analysis (variables measuring individual uses and effects). In contrast, the British cultural studies

tradition has focused on forms of data which are more naturally occurring (eg. through ethnographic methods, and other qualitative methods).

Constructing an accurate picture of family practices of television use demands a methodology with a close affinity to naturally occurring data. To talk about the family context you must use a method that accesses it directly. The open-ended semi-structured method used in the thesis study captured data that was much closer to naturally occurring data than those data that are collected through close-ended questionnaires or experimental designs. Individuals in the study were given the freedom to frame their experience *in their own words* irrespective of a set of close-ended categorical constraints.

Each of the interviews were conducted in their entirety by the author. The open-ended nature of the interview allowed (and necessitated) the interviewer to probe 'from various angles' using their own discretion to generate and obtain reliable responses. Based on the information needed to explore the hypotheses outlined in a preceding sub-section above, several cues were developed to structure the interviews for the interviewed households. Table 3 contains the list of mandatory cues used as a guide for the interviews. In each household the interview guide provided the basic topical structure of the interviews.

Table 3: Interview Guide

Viewing Patterns and Amounts Amount of television viewed (in hrs per week). Regularity as to time of day, day of week, for particular shows and show types. Amount of other leisure activity.
Variety of Set Usage Television use with VCR for movies, for recorded television. Television use for video games.
Viewing Styles Simultaneous non-viewing activity during 'watching'. Simultaneous viewing of multiple shows. Degree of planned viewing. Frequency of occurrence and typical outcomes of interrupted viewing. People present during viewing: who watches with whom.
Television Talk Communication with other household members. Context and content of the communication. Communication with others outside the household. Context and content of the communication.
Viewing Choices Control of channel selection. Conflict over program selection. Preferred programming not seen. Censoring of television content. Monitoring styles. Television viewing as reward, denial as punishment. Explicit set of rules about viewer priority.
Attitudes to Television TV viewing good or bad for people. Dimensions of harm, usefulness.

Interviews began with a reiteration of the nature of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. As each of the topics were covered by all members of the household, a note would be made on the interview guide before proceeding to the next question. During some of the interviews discussion 'jumped around' from topic to topic to some extent as individuals offered information on topics scheduled for a later period in the interview. In an attempt by the interviewer to maintain a 'natural' flow to the interviews, repeated attempts were not made to strictly adhere to the order outlined in the interview guide. Divergences from the structure of the guide were not, however, common during most of the interviews so the problem of question-order bias is minimized.

The interviews conducted in the present research employed the same in-home semi-structured interview technique as used in Morley's (1986) study. In most cases the interviews, which were conducted with all family members present, lasted about one hour in most instances. After obtaining permission from the families, an audio-cassette tape recorder recorded the verbatim proceedings of the interviews. After the interview was completed, both adults in the household were asked to complete brief questionnaires that provide basic household demographic information as well as information regarding family role orientation. The questions in these brief questionnaires are to use as a guide in the classification of families into the ideal types as described above.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Previous to the actual interview itself, all households were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation during the interview and of the confidentiality or all of the interview and questionnaire data. After the data were collected, the audio-cassettes were transcribed and coded using pseudonyms for each household and each family member.

Once the data were complete in transcribed and coded form, a key matching pseudonyms with the actual participants was given to the Department of Sociology. All data referring to actual participants has been destroyed. The audio cassettes used during the interview will be kept by the researcher. Any reference to the data in the thesis will not be traceable to the individual participants in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

After the interview data were collected and contained on audio cassettes, they were transcribed and stored on computer disk. Using an SPSS/PC+ data file the excerpts were arranged according to their relevance to the general themes outlined in the interview guide. As each of the hypotheses rely on information obtained in one general theme arranging the

output of the excerpts in this manner made the analysis of the working hypotheses more efficient and systematic.

Anecdotal evidence, in the context of forms of data summaries, were used in the discussion. While a premium is put on *interpreting* data in qualitative methodology, simple counting procedures can offer a "means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive, qualitative research" (Silverman, 1985: 140). This quantitative dimension is one that is often ignored in so-called 'qualitative' analysis. The method of 'quantifying' qualitative data employed by Hodge and Tripp (1986) in their research on children and television is used as a model for presenting the data in the analysis section to the extent that the data are quantifiable. In so doing, the criticism of the presentation of a non-representative sampling of the data is avoided.

The present research, nonetheless, does not focus on providing a set of generalizations about the 'television audience'. Rather, it attempts to analyze the meanings that watching television has for individuals located in different social positions both inside and outside their set of family relations. As this research is largely exploratory as well as qualitative, its purpose is largely to outline and develop themes that may be more thoroughly researched through a more vigorously quantitative method. A preoccupation with quantifying the data will not be exhibited in the findings chapter of this thesis which follows.

G. Household Profiles

Each of the families in the interviews were interviewed over the late summer and early autumn months of 1990. In addition to the 'objective' household information regarding each of the families appearing in the Appendix, there was a considerable amount of incidental information that neither shows on the interview transcripts or in the brief questionnaires to the heads of household. The following is a summary of the households which intends to give the reader an at least an informal impression or glimpse of each of the households. The

families are numbered according to the order in which they were interviewed. They have been divided into the 'objective' categories of family role-orientation (ie. from traditional to egalitarian) according to their scoring on the family role questions appearing in the questionnaire.

Traditional

Family No. 2

The second family interviewed in the study consists of four family members. The adults in the household are married and in their thirties. Their children, both boys, are aged nine and four. The male adult in the family has some high school education and works full-time as a limousine driver, although at the time of the interview was interested in pursuing work as a truck driver. His wife has a high school diploma and is currently employed full-time as a typist. Both of the boys attend the elementary school in an established lower/middle class suburban neighbourhood. The family lives in a single unit dwelling in the southeast section of the city.

The fact that this household's responses to the family role orientation questions tended to indicate a traditional orientation was consistent with some informal observations during the course of the interview. As a practical matter, cleaning the house in general and making family meals in particular was a responsibility largely for the wife/mother in the house. While the husband attended to chores periodically, the wife seemed to always be 'on the go' with numerous responsibilities (especially with the children and the housework) during the afternoon and evening hours. These typically leave her 'wasted by the end of each day, and by the end of each week.

Television is considered to be a valued item in this household by all the family members, and an important leisure activity. The centrality of the television (the main television was situated in the living room) and its apparent high frequency of use bore witness

to its importance for this family. Relatively high viewing amounts were recorded for the boys and the father/husband in the household. The wife/mother, on the other hand, noted that she didn't get to watch as much television as she would like. It seemed that during the evening hours much of family life took place with the television on and individuals actively watching, or with the television acting as a backdrop to a napping adult or playing children.

Family No. 5

The fifth family that participated in the study consists of a total of five members. The adults in the household are married and in their thirties. Their lone child, a female, is age eleven. The father/husband works independently full-time as a plumber while his wife is employed fulltime as a secretary. He has a technical diploma and she has some university education. Their daughter goes to a French immersion school in the area. They own and live in a single unit dwelling in a relatively recently developed middle class community northwest of Edmonton.

According to the family orientation scale, this household also was found to exhibit a traditional structure. Domestic duties are largely the task of the wife/mother in the household, although she appears to be receiving an increasing amount of help for these tasks from her daughter. Both parents, nonetheless, devote a considerable amount of time and attention to their daughter's traditional dancing activities. Though the house is apparently traditional in the sense of household division of labour, each parent apparently alternates in the driving their daughter to dance class (which occurs several times every week). Both accompany her when she competes in various competitions in various parts of Canada and the United States.

Viewing patterns in this household seemed to be the most individualist of all the households interviewed: family members apparently watch television by themselves for the most part. In general, television watching was not a common leisure activity by the adults in

this household. They made several remarks about how most of the programming was very poor and therefore the time spent in front of it was largely wasted (despite the fact that they did report watching the news on occasion, and the fact that the wife/mother did watch televised Edmonton Oiler hockey games with considerable dedication). This observation was not shared by their daughter, who gave television a much more positive evaluation. There overall low interest in television contributed to their decision to own 'only' one television, despite the displeasure of their daughter. On occasions when the adults would want to watch the news and interrupt one of their daughter's shows, there was no television alternative for her.

Family No. 9

The final family interviewed in this study consists of five family members. The adults in the household are married and are both in their forties. Each of them work outside the home. He works as a salesman full-time and has completed high school. She works parttime as a clerk and has some technical school training. They have three children, including a boy aged eighteen, and two girls, aged sixteen and twelve respectively. They live in a lower middle class neighbourhood in a single unit dwelling which they own.

According to the questionnaire data received, this family also rated as one that is traditionally structured. In this family traditional duties such as meal preparation are unambiguously the responsibility of household females (usually the wife/mother). Meanwhile the adult male in this household takes considerable pride in working in the garage 'tinkering around' during the afternoon and evening hours. Family roles with respect to domestic work were clearly defined in these ways, especially for the adults.

There are a total of three functioning television sets in this household and each of the members of the household reported watching an average amount of television. Program preference difference could be accommodated because of the alternatives to the 'family' set in

the living room. Here the household males reported typical male preferences such as information shows and documentaries, while the females expressed preferences for the situation comedies and other similar programs.

Intermediate

Family No. 1

The first family interviews consists of a total of four family members. The married heads of the household are in their forties. Their children, one male and the other female, are aged 15 and 14 years respectively. They live in a single dwelling residence which is located in a middle class suburban neighbourhood in the west end of the city. Both adults in the household work outside the home, although the female in this household works part-time while the husband maintains a full-time job. Both are school teachers (they both teach elementary aged children) in the Edmonton Public School system. Each of the children are presently attending high school in the area. They are moderately active in activities (some related to school) outside of the home, and the boy is additionally involved in maintaining a part-time job.

According to the family orientation dimension outlined above, the responses to the set of questions developed in the questionnaire component of the research rated this family as one that was somewhere in between egalitarian and traditionally oriented. This seemed to be a reasonable reflection of their composition from the observations of family life made by the interviewer. While both husband and wife were equally qualified to engage in work outside the home, the choice was made for the wife to participate to a lesser extent in the workforce. As a consequence, she was better able (had more time) to attend to the necessary routine domestic duties in the house itself. A reasonably clear delineation of responsibilities, which implicated other household members (in addition to the wife/mother) as responsible for certain duties, was evident in this household. Nonetheless a fairly high premium on values of partner compatibility and on the importance of similar interests in familial relationships were

displayed by the adults in this sample in their questionnaire responses and during informal conversation with them. Responsibility for raising the children was also seen as a dual parental responsibility.

For the most part, the adults in this household were not avid viewers of television. Nonetheless, except for the few shows viewed alone while attending to domestic work that were watched in the morning by the female adult in the household, a notable amount of viewing took place with the adults watching together. Moreover, the wife/mother in the household noted that she enjoyed watching the "family" programming, and especially together with all family members whenever possible. Both adults in this family are cognizant of the potentially harmful effects of watching television for their children (especially watching too much). They raised these concerns several times during the interview.

The rumpus room on the downstairs level of the house was the site of the family television where the children in the household spent an average amount of time (for people of their age) watching. Most of the time agreement on programming would be achieved between them viewing time coincided - which was apparently quite often. When disagreements did arise between them, their reports suggested that one or the other was relegated to watch the 'other' set or to engage in some other activity for the duration of the program.

Family No. 4

The fourth family interviewed in the present study consists of five members and resided in a single unit dwelling in an older neighbourhood just north of the centre of the city. The adults in the family were married and approximately forty years of age, while their female children are aged thirteen and eight, and their male child is aged ten. The father/husband is the holder of several university degrees and is currently employed full time as an upper level manager. The mother/wife has some university education and is a middle level manager who also works full time.

According to the questions on family orientation this family also rank near the middle: it did not appear to be particularly egalitarian nor traditional compared to the other sample households. Most of the domestic duties and official childminding activities in the household are attended to by the mother/wife. The taxing nature of the adult male's job and his successful attempt to complete an MBA while remaining at work made him less accessible for these tasks. Nonetheless, integration with the family seemed to be a fairly high priority with the father/husband.

The two older children in the household enjoy much of the same television programming and consequently often watch together. The viewing tastes of the youngest girl in the family on many occasions appear not to coincide with those of the older children. With the advocacy of the mother in this family the choices of the youngest often would prevail. The viewing preferences of the husband and wife in this family were not overly congruent. He enjoys watching 'information' shows while her preferences are for 'light' entertainment. Despite this apparent divergence of tastes, they would get together on occasion in the evening when and watch 'the news' or something of nominal joint interest. Some degree of family interaction was apparently facilitated from time to time with the occurrence of planned family movie nights.

Family No. 6

The sixth family interviewed in the survey consists of four members. The adults are married and both are in their forties. Their daughter is the oldest child and is thirteen years old, while their son is aged nine. They live in a well kept and partially renovated single unit dwelling in an older middle class neighbourhood in the central area of the city. The husband/father in this family works full-time as an upper level manager and has completed a university degree. The wife/mother in the household currently holds an undergraduate degree and is presently attending graduate school full-time.

The family orientation questionnaire data indicates that this family also is structured neither strongly towards an egalitarian nor a traditional structure. Most of the domestic work falls into the hands of the wife/mother in this household, although occasional help from the children was in evidence. The husband/father also apparently does a lot of work around the house in addition to the coaching of children's sports teams that he participates in. The children are both very, and apparently equally, active in outside sports activities.

Both of the children in the household also spend a moderate amount of time watching television in the afternoons and evenings during the week and often late at night on the weekends. For the most part the children can agree on the shows that will be watched. The instances in which agreement can not be reached do, however, tend to make for difficult and somewhat disruptive situations: there is only one television in this household. The adults in the household have different programming tastes (he likes sports while she prefers situation comedies and other 'light' programming) but would sometimes watch the evening news together.

Egalitarian

Family No. 3

The third household interviewed consists of a total of five family members. The adults in the household are married and both around forty years of age. The female adult is currently working on a graduate degree at the University of Alberta while her husband is a professor at that same university. For both of the adults this is their second marriage. The biological father of the children and previous husband of the female adult in this household lives in the city and has a visitation relationship with the children. Of the children in the household, two are boys and the other is a girl. They are aged seventeen, eight, and thirteen years respectively. At the time of the interview this family lived in a comfortably large single

dwelling house in an upper middle class suburban area to the northwest of the city.

This family ranked highly egalitarian on the family orientation questions. It appears that this objective appraisal was consistent with patterns of behavior and with attitudes evident in the family. Domestic duties were not generally considered person specific in this household. A high degree of cooperation between the adults in this household with respect to the completion of domestic tasks was noticed. Meal preparation in particular seemed to be an alternating domestic responsibility.

With respect to television use in the family there was a certain high degree of reflection, largely motivated by concerns raised by the adults, among family members. Because of the beliefs of the parents about the potential harmful effects of watching too much television (in this household television was considered to be a marginally useful leisure pursuit), there was a daily two-hour limit to viewing time for the children. While the children watched several of the same shows without incident, those cases where program preferences differed created conflictual situations. In contrast, the adults in the household almost always watched television together, and usually at the end of the day after most of the household activity had quieted down.

Family No. 7

Family number seven consists of four members. The adults in this family are married and both are in their twenties. The husband/father works fulltime as an accountant for the government while his wife works as a social worker in the city. Both have some university education. Their children include a boy aged seven, and a girl aged two. The boy is currently attending elementary school while the girl attends daycare. They live in a rented duplex in a suburban section of the southeast section of the city.

According to the questionnaire responses given by the adults, this family is strongly structured according to a set of egalitarian familial roles. During the visitation it was observed

that attention to the children (one of whom was being disruptive) was administered alternately and equally by both parents. Both reported taking turns in looking after the children (who demanded a fair amount of attention) on a regular basis.

In their household setting their television took a fairly prominent place. It was located in the living room which was adjacent to the kitchen. It reportedly was viewed from the eating area. Their seven-year old boy is a particularly avid watcher of television, and is often reportedly 'fixated' to the television during his favorite shows. Both husband and wife reported to enjoy much of the same programming (she was the only female in the sample to report liking science fiction). Because of the relatively disruptive nature of attending to their children, on most occasions the adults in this household are prevented from engaging in watching television in the manner in which they would like.

Family No. 8

Household number eight consists of four members. The adults are currently in a common-law relationship. The male adult is in his twenties while his partner is in her early thirties. He works full-time as the manager of a hotel and has a high school diploma. She has some high school education and is currently receiving assistance for a debilitating injury which prevents her from pursuing work outside the home. Their children, a girl aged thirteen and a boy aged five, are both from her previous relationship. The girl attends junior high public school in the area while the boy will begin attending school in the next year. They all live in a duplex for which they pay rent. Their neighbourhood is located in an older working class section of the city just north of the downtown area.

According to the questionnaire data the structure of this household rated high on the egalitarian dimension. Because of the disabling nature of the injury to the partner/mother in this household the children and her common-law partner have become actively involved in the regular domestic duties. The male adult also apparently takes an active interest in raising the

children, and reported anecdotally of some of the activities he participated in with the children.

The individuals in this family watched more television than any of the other families surveyed in this sample. The lone television in the household was reportedly 'always on', if not always watched. The female partner/mother reportedly watched several soap operas during the day while attending to various non-strenuous household tasks. The afternoon and the evening were prime viewing time for the children in the household. The television was favorably evaluated by all the members of this household. Television viewing was generally considered to be an enjoyable and relaxing pastime for this family, and their television was considered to be almost 'one of the family'.

H. Toward An Analytical Typology of Household Types

The preceding sketches of family interviews is intended to give the reader additional background information which is not contained in the household summaries Appendix. These outlines have been organized according to the ranking of the individual households on the 'objective' criterion of familial role orientation. Some anecdotal excerpts have also indicated qualitative differences between these family types. Certain similarities exist within each category, which distinguish families of one type from another. While the interview data at times imply certain types of action with respect to television use typical of different family 'ideal types', in general these differences remain somewhat speculative. As a consequence these analytical categories are not used to structure the discussion of research findings that follows this section. Where there are observed and meaningful differences between families of different types with respect to the set of guiding hypotheses these are anecdotally mentioned.

Morley's study ultimately focuses largely on gender related issues as opposed to those associated with other factors (eg. social class, for example) because of a lack of sample differentiation. The present study aborts a systematic analysis of the 'effect' of family type

rather because of the insufficient depth of the data. Differences between families in terms of their typical patterns of actions around the television set might have become more noticeable had the study focused on fewer families (perhaps one of each orientation type) but more closely with the implementation of multiple methods. For example, after a few families had been selected and initially interviewed, the researcher could have perhaps made arrangements to spend a few afternoons and evenings in each household to act as a participant/observer. Not only could the 'facts' brought out during the interview be verified to an extent, but perhaps more importantly, the typical patterns of action would become more apparent. It would also give the researcher ample time to talk individually to each of the family members and elicit information from informal and 'unofficial' interviews which appear more 'naturally' than even semi-structured interviews.

IV. Research Findings

The following section contains an analysis of the working hypotheses suggested in the preceding section. Each of the hypotheses will be analyzed separately according to the order in which they were presented above. Where possible, simple counting procedures have been imposed on the data in an effort to contextualize the anecdotal evidence. The final section presented in this chapter discusses some of the shortcomings of the present research and investigates some the possibilities for future research.

The results part of the thesis explored the hypotheses as outlined and introduced possibilities for further study. A systematic consideration of the transcript (and other incidental) data led to the selection of exemplary anecdotal evidence in the results section. The discussion of the data attempts to contextualize the excerpts for the benefit of the reader. Additional anecdotal evidence supporting and qualifying the findings presented in the defence draft will be included in the final version. Strength will be afforded to the quality of the discussion of results section with the inclusion of more excerpt data. Allowing the reader increased access to the data, particularly as it is seen in its context, will enhance the findings section.

Findings are meant simply to give reader a balanced view of the data. The object of the research was to examine general themes, not to conclude about or test hypotheses as in quantitative designs. Future research can take up these issues more thoroughly.

A. Subcultural TV Use Outside the Home

Subcultures are social groups held together by a set of common experiences and values. The nature of the set of beliefs may vary per subculture according to the interests and life experiences of its members. The historically recent phenomenon of mass media creates the possibility for values and experiences to be transmitted through messages which are made available to large segments of the population. Television messages, though received in a

domestic setting, allow the domestically isolated audience member exposure to a set of values and common experiences with others in similar circumstances in a way not possible in previous times. The 'cultural capital' derived from television movies, sports, sitcoms, and other programming may then prove valuable in social contexts outside the home as a type of 'coin' for social exchange. In contrast to other types of media use which are consummatory (pursued as an end-in-itself), this type of media use has a specific goal-oriented dimension.

In the present study, it was found that generally television broadcast programming by itself, and in association with video rented movies, provided many of the interviewed individuals (mostly children) with a source of cultural capital that proved useful in the maintenance of subcultural communities (eg. peer groups) outside the home. The styles of subcultural television usage and the meanings associated with them do, however, vary for different individuals in the sample.

Who Talks About Television

From the transcribed interview data, assessments were made by the researcher about the extent to which television was the subject of conversation with others outside the home. Although participants were not asked to evaluate how important it was to them, most offered some indication of its importance. Where such cues were missing, judgments were made on the basis of the enthusiasm of response, and on the extent to which the individual elaborated about the content and site of such usage with people from outside the household. Table 4 gives an indication of how important television informed topics were the study's participants in their interactions with non-family members.

Table 4: Extent of TV Talk With Non-Family Members by Position and Sex

	Sex	
Family Position	Male	Female
Adults	None- 2 Low- 3 Moderate- 3 High- 0	None- 3 Low- 4 Moderate- 1 High- 1
Children	None- 0 Low- 1 Moderate- 4 High- 4	None- 2 Low- 1 Moderate- 5 High- 1

While the small number of cases makes it difficult to conclude categorically about subcultural uses, interesting patterns became evident from the interview data. The importance of television for facilitating relationships with others outside the home appears to figure more prominently for children than for their parents.

Children's Talk About Television

The children in the sample tended to report that talking about television programs with their friends was frequent. Adults in the sample tended to corroborate this assertion. For example, one adult who works as an elementary school teacher commented:

> When I'm walking around in the school and the kids are doing art, all they are talking about is TV. And many times this past year especially it was Nintendo. And [*Teenage Mutant Ninja*] *Turtles*. They talk about nothing else.

In contrast, moreover, to the adults in the sample, who described their talk as being merely initiated by television content in general terms, the interviewed children described a picture in which details of specific television shows were often central to their interaction with others outside the home. They mentioned with great frequency which shows they liked to talk about

with their friends. Most often these shows were situation comedies, rented movies, sports or cartoons. Like talk about television between adults, children would alert others about good shows that the others may have an interest in. But rather unlike the adult style of talk, the children in this sample seemed to be more involved in actively reliving particular shows seen with their friends. For example, the answers of these female children to the question of television centered talk were typical:

> You know, if there's a good movie on and they don't know about it. You go and tell them, "There's a movie on tonight." Or we would watch *The Simpsons* or something and you'd ask the person if they saw that episode, and you'd laugh about some of the things that happened on the show.

And,

> We talk about movies and stuff. If we go to the movies, we talk about that. And, if there was a good movie on TV, or on *Arsenio Hall*, we talk about that. And we talk about, if there was a good TV show on, like if *Growing Pains* was a good one, stuff like that.

Both male and female children tended to talk about situation comedies and rented movies. Male children, particularly those who were older, tended to use sports to a greater extent in their television related talks than did the females. Females, on the other hand, were slightly more likely to talk about certain family situation comedies (like *Growing Pains* and *Who's the Boss?*) than males.

Though not explicitly asked in all interviews, both parents and children indicated that the children were far more likely than adults to engage in activities with friends from outside the household that involved television indirectly. For example, one 5 year-old boy professed to play *Batman* and *All-Star Wrestling* with his friends. In addition, other activities with friends directly centered around television use. Children were much more likely than adults to watch rented videos, after school programming, or to use the television to play video games

with friends at one or the other's home. Sometimes events such as sleepovers were arranged around the viewing of several rented videos.

Since the ages of the interviewed children varied from the very young to older adolescents different patterns of subcultural uses between children's age groups emerged from the interview data. Table 5 shows the extent to which television talk was reported by male and female children of different ages.

Table 5: Television Talk With Non-Family Members by Sex and Age of Child

	Sex	
	Male	Female
Children (12+)	None- 0 Low- 1 Moderate- 3 High- 0	None- 1 Low- 2 Moderate- 4 High- 0
Children (8-11)	None- 0 Low- 0 Moderate- 0 High- 3	None- 0 Low- 0 Moderate- 0 High- 1
Children (7-)	None- 0 Low- 1 Moderate- 1 High- 1	None- 2 Low- 0 Moderate- 0 High- 0

These data show that subcultural use, as measured by the extent of television talk, does vary among children between the age groups. Even the very young children interviewed in the study were found to be relatively heavy consumers of television. Children in this age group have the fewest opportunities and abilities to have extra-domestic social relationships and therefore their use tends to be less relevant in this regard. As children move through the life-cycle the opportunities for membership in groups outside the home may increase.

Consequently, for children in the middle age group (8-11 years of age) all of whom reported a high degree of usage of television related talk with their friends, this usage became commonplace as their exposure to outside groups increased. Among the males in this age group the topics of choice tended to be cartoons (*The Simpsons* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* were common to all). Children in this group tended to be the most likely to outwardly incorporate the content into their own personal style. [7]

Children in the oldest age group (12 and older) maintained a relatively high degree of usage in subcultural contexts, although the television topics they find useful were predominently centered around sports and movies for the males and sitcoms and movies for the females. Nonetheless, topical preference did not split evenly across gender lines in this age group; one girl mentioned that she would talk about recent hockey games with another female friend, and two males revealed that sitcoms were the source of their conversations from time to time. For children of all age groups, viewing preferences and patterns tended to coincide directly with the content deemed topical for their relationships outside the home.

These data seem to indicate that for children, particularly those who are school age, television provides an important resource which help in the maintenance of relationships outside the family. It is a resource over which they feel a certain degree of mastery, which speaks to their interests, and which is shared by important others.

Adult's Talk About Television

For the most part, the adults in the sample reported fewer instances of television related talk with others from outside the household. The talk that they did mention was also qualitatively different than the television talk of children. Some adults mentioned that items from television, a news story for example, would be used as a starting point for conversations

[7]For example, one eight year old male, when asked if he liked watching the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* replied, "They're outrageous, dude!" [An expression used in the show to express enthusiastic approval].

with others at work. Several male and female adults mentioned that topics of conversation would often be stimulated by television, although the conversations themselves would usually not be about a specific show.

There were two exceptions to this observation from the interview data. Adult males reported that occasionally sports-related talk would centre around a game from the previous evening or weekend. This, however, was not common for the males in this sample. Two specifically mentioned that they did not like to participate in the office 'jock-talk'. Nonetheless, their awareness of it was testament to its existence. This finding is consistent with the males interviewed in Morley's sample, who were reticent to report talking about television with their peers.

The other exception came from the lone woman in the sample who did not work outside the home. Her out of house contacts at Bingo provided opportunities to discuss a variety of television inspired topics.

> Even people you don't know will talk to you about soaps. Walk into a Bingo hall and sit there in the afternoon and mention the soap. They'll say, "That dirty bitch, did you see what she did?" Stuff like that. Or I find that a lot of people will talk about something that happened on *60 Minutes* or something like that. Or something that's happened on TV that's quite serious. Like maybe its a show with a rape or something like that and you'll hear it on TV and we'll be talking about it later.

This woman was the only one in the thesis sample whose talk with friends about television approximated the females in Morley's sample.

From the interview data it seemed for the most part, however, that for both men and women, and particularly for those who worked outside the home, television provided a relatively unimportant basis for interaction with friends and co-workers. Perhaps the finding relates to the lesser occupational participation of the females in Morley's sample. The women in the thesis sample who worked outside the home for the most part reported adopting what Morley refers to as a 'masculine' way of consuming the television message with respect to talk

outside the home.

B. Subcultural Sources of Domestic Conflicts

Television programming used by children directed at sustaining peer group relationships tended to overlap with their preferences generally. The shows that children liked tended to be the same ones around which they would centre their television related conversations with friends. The present hypothesis suggests that some media use motivated by this sort of activity would have the potential of causing strain within the domestic context. Tension would be evident between children and their parents in situations where certain programming adopted by peer groups as subculturally relevant but was deemed unacceptable by authority figures within the household. This situation came up in several of the households interviewed, particularly with respect to certain movies and other broadcast programming.

Watching the Forbidden

When asked the question "Are there any shows in this household that are censored for the kids?" most of the adults listed specific shows or certain kinds of television shows and rented movies that were either frowned upon but permitted, or censored from viewing altogether. In almost unanimous fashion, adults in the sample indicated their dislike of films generally referred to as 'horror' movies as appropriate viewing fare for their children. [8] The sources of parental contempt for this particular genre of movie were sketchy from the interview data. Somewhat surprisingly, the movies were not considered bad out of fear that the children would imitate the depicted violence. The only apprehension expressed, mentioned by the parents in one household, relating to inadvertent learning from such shows focused on the 'swearing' behavior that was prominent in them. Typically these were movies not available

[8]Movies reported by adults in this classification included *Die Hard, Friday the 13th, Robocop, The Exorcist,* and *Nightmare on Elm Street.*

on broadcast television but rather could be obtained at video rental stores.

Attempts at monitoring rented movies seen were only partially successful. In some cases children would be allowed to rent 'questionable' movies on the understanding that active censoring on the part of the adults would take place. Whether active censoring of viewing material actually occurred, however, is questionable. In other cases, children confessed to having watched otherwise forbidden shows at their friends' houses. The following exchange indicates how the actions of a child contradict the wishes of the parent. Interaction with peers supersedes seeking parental approval.

Father- Well, [ten year-old son] goes to his friend's house and that's all his buddy rents is war movies, right? Rambo and everything else.
Mother- He'll have a whole evening of like five war movies, I just can't believe it.
Daughter- And we're not allowed to watch horror movies.
Mother- And if [eldest daughter] goes to a sleepover sometimes they'll have [horror movies].

The extent of actual conflict arising in the household should not be overstated. Parental disapproval of children's viewing of violent movies was typically not severe. If the data seem to indicate sources of intrafamily conflict, it did not occur because of the show's content *per se*. In some instances family friction resulted from the fact that forbidden shows were viewed by children despite the known wishes of their parents. Some of the animosity may be the result of the threat to parental authority of their children's actions, the viewing representing an action taking place outside of their control. Activities such as viewing 'forbidden' movies appears to facilitate relationships outside the household at the risk of putting strains on relationships inside the home, especially the parentchild relationship.

In other instances, mostly where the children were under ten years old, several adults considered their children 'too young' to watch that sort of movie because of the possibility that it would be disturbing to them. One mother of a family with older teenagers commented that she felt her children were 'mature' watchers and at the stage where they could pick their

own shows without restriction. Whatever the concern about violence, it did not appear that fear of imitation of violent actions would be a problem for child viewers of violence: neither from the perspective of the child nor the adult.

Another set of concerns was expressed about the content of situation comedies that were viewed by children. They tended to object generally to depictions of distorted reality and inappropriate forms of behavior. One father in a traditional family summed it up rather directly,

> You get these little smart-asses [on television] at nine years old telling adults what to do, and this and that. And they know everything, which they probably do, because they're raised at such a fast pace or whatever. And of course the kids around here sop it all up, eh? I think that part's no good.

And another from an intermediate domestic situation summed it up more abstractly,

> I think that people can learn the wrong norms, in society, because of sort of a warped sense of perspective of a certain show. And if its on long enough, and often enough, people think that that's the way things are.

In some cases the proscriptions were directed at the same shows that were popular for children and that they reported talking to friends about. For example, Bart Simpson [lead character in *The Simpsons*] was cited as a bad role model for children in three of the households because he allegedly teaches children to be underachieving in school and in life. *The Cosby Show* was criticized in two households for its failure to portray a realistic picture of a typical black American family. *Married...With Children* was another show that appealed to children in a few households yet was disliked by many parents. The implicitly sexual innuendo and sexist stereotyping were evaluated negatively by adults in two of the interviewed households. Where viewing such shows did not interfere with existing bedtimes, in most instances the children were allowed to watch these shows. Sometimes the parents would contribute criticisms of the

shows in question, more with the intention of teaching than regulating: true censorship of television programming was not often reported. In at least one instance the alleged pupils, however, were found to be resistant to a didactic intervention.

Interviewer- So what sort of things wouldn't you approve of or do you ever talk with them about stuff?
Mother- Well we do. Like with *Married...With Children*, they [children] both came up and informed us that they liked the show so we made an effort to sit down and watch it.... We watched it and we really didn't like it....
Daughter- Mom points out when its sexist and stuff, and she goes on.... But dad laughs [during *Married...With Children*].
Father- They're bad role models.
Daughter- That doesn't make any sense!
Son- Dad, you're just like Homer [Simpson, of *The Simpsons*]

This exchange illustrates not that children don't understand the criticisms levied against the shows in question, but that parental criticisms were equivocal, and reminiscent of the television character mentioned by the son. In the television show *The Simpsons*, the father named Homer is often characterized as acting in an irrational and foolhardy manner, particular with respect to his children. In the exchange cited above, the children of one particular household pose to their father a countercriticism of their lived experience based on television reality.

One ironic finding in the research relates to the adult perception of the lack of usefulness of television in the context of maintaining relationships with people outside the family. Most of the adults interviewed thought that time watching television spent by their children was either for one of two purposes. First, they might watch for educational purposes, for finding out facts about the world. Generally this was regarded by adults as television's positive function. Second, adults felt that watching television may provide entertainment, a way to pass the time. This was generally considered to be a positive attribute of television. Moreover, most adults felt that the latter usage was more common for their children, and for children generally. Adults felt that children's television viewing tended to

come at the peril of developing relationships with peers. One father describes the social benefits for children in a world without television.

> All I'm saying is that [television] is 90% bad and 10% good. If the television wasn't available, and VCRs weren't around, every kid is going to be doing more reading, more playing, more shooting baskets, more shooting marbles, spend more time with their friends interacting socially than sitting in front of the 'boobtube' just absorbing radiation.

One mother agreed,

> But there's more things in this life than to sit and watch the TV. Society as a whole has kind of gone wrong that way because you tend to base most everything on the TV. Before I guess you did a lot more visiting back and forth with different people and interacted more than what you do now.

In contrast, the children in the sample did not make the same observations. A few children commented that watching too much television might be physiologically disabling (leaving one feeling 'buzzed out'). In extreme circumstances, one child even agreed that excessive television viewing could be socially isolating (causing one to become a 'geek'). They tended to be less concerned about the potential harmful effects of viewing and more cognizant of its social utility than adults. Whether television use actually hindered interaction with peer group members is inconclusive from the data; the children interviewed apparently did not feel that it did. Undoubtedly, persistent and isolated viewing of television would detract from social interaction outside of school.

Among the children interviewed none felt that it was socially isolating for them. The children in this sample seemed to fit in 'play' with the friends even outside the school setting, despite, or perhaps sometimes because of time spent watching television. Whether going over to a friend's house to watch something or talking on the phone to friends while watching something on television, the children seemed to be able to incorporate television rather efficiently into their peer group life. Further, it is questionable whether late evening viewing

would typically hinder social interaction anyway, given the constraint or a formal or informal curfew that family life usually entails for its younger members. Adults interviewed generally, nonetheless, tended to see only restricted and partial uses for television that only serve to prevent other more important and useful activities.

C. Gender and Viewing Styles

Studying the gender specific 'modes of attention' allow us to discover important facts relating to the gendered organization of television viewing behavior. In the present study, in six out of the nine households, both male and female adults were occupied full-time in work outside the house. Consequently, interest lay in determining to what extent the household remained a worksite for women and not men despite their inclusion in pursuits outside the home, and what effect this orientation would have on their viewing habits. Most of those interviewed in the sample (including children) described a variety of personal viewing styles; individuals did not exhibit one 'mode of attentiveness' at all times for all programs. The interview data gathered, nonetheless, seemed to indicate that, while family role orientation appears to make some amount of difference, to a considerable degree the domestic setting is one that is approached differentially with regard to the style of viewing along gender lines.

With respect to adult styles of viewing, gendered differences appeared to be more salient between the adults interviewed than between children. The typical male style of viewing could generally be described as 'intense' or 'immersed' in the sense of other non-viewing activities that distract from it. Some males reported that their time watching television was psychologically relaxing, particularly after the demands of the work day. Two others mentioned eating as a possible simultaneous non-viewing activity. Only one male in the sample described doing work taken home from his job during television viewing time. Adult male viewing time took place in the evening, and in some cases in the afternoons, just after arriving home from work. They tended to express a preference for viewing their shows with a

high degree of involvement, as they professed high degrees of interest in the shows that they watched.

The women in the sample also expressed interest in watching certain shows, although the females tended to report interest in slightly fewer shows and they expressed interest to a lesser degree than the males. However, it became evident that attentive viewing activity mentioned by females tended to take place later in the evening in those cases where it took place at all. It appeared that viewing during suppertime (early evening) was often a non-alternative for women (and men from the egalitarian households) because it coincided with the domestic duty of making the family meal. For many women in the sample, (and especially for those in non-egalitarian households) the work day did not end until some time after supper, which in some cases lasted until late evening. After this time a more attentive style of viewing was usually employed when television was viewed.

Some women, however, reported a moderate amount of television use in these households that was integrated with domestic work (eg. vacuuming, knitting, ironing, etc.). Distracted viewing took place during supper and into the evening while attentive viewing was always later at night. In some instances situations existed in which domestic work centered around the kitchen area were facilitated by a nearby television that could be heard, if not seen during meal preparation. One woman in a tradtional household recounts her typical viewing habits after her day at work as integrating domestic chores.

Interviewer- I just want to get an idea about the time of day that you watch television.
Woman- Probably an hour of the suppertime news, 'til 7 pm I watch a little bit of the news. And usually from 9 to 10 there's something on that we watch. But other than that, there's too many other things to do to be watching TV.
Interviewer- And when you're watching the news, what set are you watching?
Women- The one in the kitchen. You know, you watch the first half on here and the second half in the living room.

In other cases the television is used as a 'filler', to create a background for the undertaking of

other household chores. In one egalitarian household, for example, the television accompanies the domestic chores of both adults.

> Interviewer- Would you say that most of the time you are doing something else at the same time as the television is on?
> Woman- Sometimes I knit, read the paper, or books, or magazines. Usually we're looking after [daughter] as well.
> Interviewer- Anything else?
> Woman- Ya. There's making supper, washing dishes.
> Man- Kind of like a background sound in one way. You're kind of paying attention to it, its not just noise...

Patterns of domestic work and television viewing styles did appear to vary according to family orientation. For example, women in non-egalitarian households were sometimes able to enjoy programming in a relatively uninterrupted and active manner during other times of the day and week to an extent equal with their husbands. One women, for example, reported that during televised hockey broadcasts she did nothing but watch intensely. Even interruptions as trivial as the telephone ringing were allegedly ignored. During this time household members recognized the sanctity of her 'hockey game'. More common, however, was the complaint mentioned by a few women that their daily routines did not allow them to enjoy watching television as they would like to. The demands of work outside the home and domestic responsibilities left many in a state not conducive to the enjoyment of watching television.

> I can concentrate better when nobody's in the room. Like I'll watch more TV if I'm on holidays or something.... [But on weekday evenings] I'm too tired, I always fall asleep. And that gets really frustrating. Especially if its a good movie.

In addition, and somewhat contrarily, other women felt that watching television was the ideal sort of leisure activity to come after a hard day's work.

> You go to work and you battle with stuff all day. Its nice to have something to just [relax with].
> Ask almost any person in the circle that lives around us and they'll say the best sedative

> that they know of is watching television. Most people you talk to, they say "If I can't sleep, I'll go out on the couch, get nice and warm, turn on the TV and I'm out."

The physiological and psychological demands imposed by working outside the house may affect the ability to engage in leisure activities such as watching television. This fact alone was found to be relevant for both males and female adults in most of the interviewed households. More than one male complained about the taxing nature of his job. Despite this, for most households (except for the three egalitarian households), domestic duties still remained female responsibilities. Males, though often reporting that they tended to various household tasks, these appeared to be exceptional, or related to the season of year. Regularity of 'domestic' activity after work seemed to be less for them, especially for those in households where a non-egalitarian role-orientation was evident. Attempts at integrating television viewing with domestic chores tended to result in viewing practices which became ambiguous regarding leisure more often for women than for men in those traditional households in the sample.

In contrast to the observed gendered differences between adults, the style of viewing for the children in the sample did not appear to be gender specific. Both males and females exhibited behavior that could be described as 'distracted' to 'immersed'. On occasion viewing would take a distracted form, such as in instances where television use would be combined with school homework assignments, drawing pictures, reading magazines, talking on the telephone with friends, or doing household chores. Of the tasks mentioned, household chores were the least likely to be combined with television viewing, given their relatively few domestic responsibilities, and the constraints of time and space imposed by some of the domestic responsibilities mentioned (eg. going to the store, taking the dog for a walk, etc.). Several children, nonetheless, showed a high degree of ingenuity in combining diverse activities with watching television. One fifteen year old boy commented:

> Sometimes ... I play Ping-pong or something downstairs.... [I play Ping-pong with

> someone else, or by myself against the wall. And sometimes I make [life size cloth mache figures].

One pair of siblings was able to hook up video games to the television and play them while listening to the audio from broadcast television as an accompaniment to the game. Several other children reported that they complete their homework assignments while watching television. The distracted style of children was more likely to be involved with other leisure activities than with domestic work.

For the children, it appears that age is a more decisive factor than sex in determining viewing style. For example, adults interviewed alleged that it was more likely for young children to be described as being highly immersed in television viewing ('glued to the set') than for older siblings. The younger children themselves corroborated this assertion. For example, one parent of a seven year old boy described the common occurrence of being unable to distract his son's attention away from the television when it was on. This aroused anxiety in some parents over television's detrimental physiological effects (eg. too much radiation intake), though worry over negative effects did not appear to modify viewing style. Older children in some cases appeared to incorporate more activities with television use. Because children also tended to be heavier viewers of television than did adults, however, they nonetheless did continue to engage in much viewing activity that could be considered 'immersed'. By contrast, no definite patterns of difference emerged with respect to 'gendered' viewing styles for children.

D. Gender and Viewing Patterns

Television programmers pay attention to data about television audience composition at different times during the broadcasting day. In so doing they are able to target appropriate broadcast material to specific audiences. So much is common sense: late night viewing during

the week appeals specifically to 'mature' audiences that are more likely to be viewing at that time, while Saturday morning is 'cartoon' time directed at younger audiences. Such realities are made possible through the organization of daily life in society. In the past decade in Canada, as well as other modern western societies, however, the experience of television by audiences has become increasingly complex. New technologies, especially the VCR (video cassette recorder) and increased cable access have increased the availability of programming to a considerable degree.

The households interviewed in this study all have access to these new technologies. While much of actual television viewing was found to consist of watching live broadcast television, a considerable portion of reported television usage involves the renting of movies (all homes had a VCR). A smaller portion was found to consist of viewing replays of broadcast programming recorded by family members. Still other television set usage involves that of video games using the monitor as a display screen. These varieties of usage make more difficult the notion of audience as definite in time and space. The larger question of how the household organizes itself around the 'live' broadcast television has been impinged by the restructuring potential of these various technologies on viewing practices. These questions are addressed in this section.

For the adults interviewed in the sample, males tended to report slightly higher viewing totals than for females (see Table 6). In addition, both men and women tended to report that their viewing during the week took place almost exclusively in the middle to late evening after the domestic labour of meal preparation had been completed. However, for all the households reporting a traditional or intermediate family role orientation it was largely the responsibility of the women to organize, if not complete, that daily domestic task herself. To an extent, children reaching a certain age were expected to help out from time to time, or for certain tasks during supper, but usually only to a rather limited extent. During this time the males tended to engage in other leisure activities such as lying on the couch or reading the

newspaper, other non-routine domestic work, other job-related activities, or watching television. A simple comparison of viewing totals (see Table 6) indicates that children tend to view greater amounts of television than their parents.

Table 6: Reported Amount of Television Viewing Per Week by Family Position

Amount Per Week (Hrs.)	Adults		Children	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5	1	3	-	-
6-10	3	2	-	-
11-15	3	3	2	5
16-20	1	-	5	3
21-25	-	-	1	-
26-30	-	-	1	-
31 or more	1	1	1	1

The organization of children's viewing appeared to be more fully integrated throughout their daily routines. Children were much more likely than adults to report viewing behavior during the early morning (before school), during the lunch hour, and during the late afternoon-early evening (around the typical supper hour). For the younger children interviewed, these times of day were routinized to a fairly high degree. Only for older children did later evening afternoon viewing behavior occur. Domestic responsibilities and other activities were less restrictive for children than for their parents.

While viewing behavior tended to focus on the above times during the week, on the weekends viewing tended to take place quite extensively during Saturday morning for the younger children. In some households, the weekend (usually a Friday or Saturday night) sometimes represented the time when periodic family 'movie nights' would occur. It appeared to be a time when all family members could disengage from other activities and to engage in time set aside for the 'family'.

Further probing into these weekend events revealed that not all programming (ie. rented movies) chosen for these family events necessarily appealed to all family members: the concept of 'family programming' was found to be somewhat of an oxymoron. As a consequence, not everyone in the family would participate fully in the watching of all shows. One father explains what the movie nights consist of in their household

> What we would do is, sometimes we would buy, rent one for the family, rent one for my wife and I, and a Walt Disney, or a 20 minute cartoon for the youngest one. And everybody's represented sort of thing.

Movie nights tend to promote fragmented interaction in addition to partial 'family' aspect of these events.

Weekends also represented a time for children to stretch the weekday family boundaries in terms of bedtime. Thus, viewing patterns that wouldn't have been permissible during the week do not pertain to the weekend, which is afforded a special status by children and adults alike.

No clear pattern emerged about the organization of leisure time generally in relation to domestic tasks. Although many women when asked about leisure activities outside of television viewing reported low amounts, this was also the case for many men in the sample. Many of their routine activities centered around their children (eg. watching them play sports, driving them to their activities) were often not considered leisure as such. Some other activities were thought of as nominally leisure (eg. studying). Still other activities that were reportedly done individually (eg. reading, playing sports) seemed to be much less frequent than television viewing. Apparently, for most individuals in households of all types, television viewing was the dominant routine form of leisure activity.

E. Gender and Program Preferences

The people interviewed in the research listed a wide variety of specific television shows and different show types that they enjoyed watching. For most people, their tastes in programming was not isolated to one type of television show. Most showed an appreciation for a variety of shows. In addition, there were few in the sample who expressed an obsession with certain programming; there were few one-dimensional 'sports' or 'soap opera' addicts. These traditional stereotypes for the most part did not hold.

Most of the viewers of television in these households tended to think of themselves as having preferences, but as being able to appreciate a wide variety of programming as well. Nonetheless, there were certain regularities of preference according to gender which emerged from the interview data. From the responses interviewed individuals gave to the question "What are your favorite shows, or types of shows" the researcher attempted to build a visual typology of which shows tend to be liked by which family members. Figure 1 shows graphically how program preferences were found to be gender-specific and aligned according to family position and age as well.

Figure 1: Summary of Program Preferences by Sex and Family Position

	Male	**Female**
Adults	News Documentary Information 'Reality' Sports Science Fiction	Drama Comedy Mystery Soap Opera 'Family' Sitcoms
Children	Cartoons	

As Figure 1 indicates, some types of programs tended to be gender specific while others were found to overlap across genders and vertically between family positions. Analyzing to what extent certain types of shows penetrate socially arranged boundaries may give indications as to

how specific television programming functions in the normal everyday running of a family.

The program types appearing in the peripheries nearest the corners of the box in Figure 1 indicate those types of programs which are preferred by a specific grouping in the family. The most polarized categories of taste were found to be science-fiction, which appealed mostly to some males in the sample, and soap operas, which appealed almost exclusively to some females of different ages in the sample. Both examples acted in functionally similar ways in facilitating same sex interaction between parents and children. In the households where science-fiction was mentioned as a show of preference, both male parent and child took active interest in the program. In one situation, special attention was paid to ensure that such programming was not missed. In these households sciencefiction shows (most notably *Star Trek*, and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) were afforded special status by the males who would set aside other activities temporarily to engage in viewing their program.

The uses of the soap opera within the family worked in much the same way for some female children and parents as science-fiction, sports, and documentary did for males in some households. In two particular households the soap opera was popular with both parent and child females. Typically both mothers and daughters were not always able to watch the shows together. Girls would usually be at school during airing of day-time soap operas, and women who worked were constrained by their usual daytime hours of work. Nonetheless, when they were able to watch the 'soaps' (in summer, on holidays, or through recording the shows on the VCR) they would try and "fill each other in" about what was happening on a show whenever one or the other would have the opportunity to view the show. For the most part, however, "watching the soaps" was something that the females in this sample were not able to do on a regular basis because of school and work obligations.

In the three households where females enjoyed watching soap operas the adult males

made efforts to distance themselves from the genre by denigrating it.[9] In the only household sampled where the woman didn't work outside the home, the adult male did not display an appreciation for this predominently female oriented genre, despite the fact that the family was egalitarian in orientation.

> Seeing how we're on the topic of soaps, its been greatly known that this lady here [common-law partner] watches *Days of Our Lives* at 11 am, *Another World* from 12 pm to 1 pm.... Then she catches *Young and the Restless* from 4 pm to 5 pm. And then she goes out and does something.

Another male adult whose daughters enjoyed watching soap operas was less candid,

> And I think that the media is not fair, cause all they do is find some garbage and all they do is dwell on this garbage. And that's my views of it. And you, if you want to hear garbage, then, well, turn the soaps on.

For the most part, males in households where soaps were watched and females in households where they were not both tended to feel that time spent watching soap operas, as opposed to time spent watching other things, could be put to use in much more productive ways.

Other types of programming appeared to be largely gender-specific as well. Sports and documentary type programs were popular with many more males than females in the interviewed sample. Both of these genres enabled the possibility for 'father-son' interactions. In three households interviewees reported that adult males would 'teach' the rules of televised sports, or explain documentary programming to younger males. Besides these professions of purposive interaction, sports and documentary programming provided opportunities for males in the family to simply 'do something' together. With some exceptions from the sample, these types of programming were only nominally interesting to females in the household. For the

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[9]For the most part soap operas were also denegrated by females in households where they were not watched.

most part, sports and 'information' oriented programming was considered to be a male domain.

In the sample the participants distinguished between information shows (ie. documentaries on various topics) and news shows (ie. factual accounts of current events). While the former was found to be somewhat gender specific, the latter genre crossed over gender lines for the adults interviewed. [10] For most of the adults in the sample who worked outside the home the news was a popular program. Many of the adults in the sample professed to watch the news together. Many expressed a preference for watching the late evening broadcast of the news. It was generally considered by both males and females to be time that both could spend together and 'unwind', having finished most of their activities and duties for the day. Watching the evening news together was often the first time in the day when both adults in the household had time to be together without the presence of other disturbances. In households where relations between adults were congenial, the evening news takes on a special significance.

In a similar way, cartoons, and to a lesser extent 'family' sitcoms, appeared to bridge the gender gap between children of similar ages. It became apparent through the interviews that the younger children of both sexes had great interest in a variety of cartoons.

In addition, programs of other types had potential for bridging gaps along both axes of difference. Comedies, dramas, and mysteries all had appeal to diverse household members. The best example of a show capable of bridging these interests is *America's Funniest Home Videos*. This show, which is based on a collection of unusual and often comical excerpts taken from domestically produced video tapes, was one that many households interviewed enjoyed watching together a great deal. Similarly, shows like *The Cosby Show*, and 'reality' shows like *Rescue 911*, and *America's Most Wanted* provided similar opportunities for family

[10]Children in the sample, particularly the younger ones, apparently have little interest in the news. It was regarded by children generally as the most boring form of programming, and therefore the least important.

togetherness around the set.

These genres of common preference, nonetheless, were not always viewed by the entire family. There was still diversity between household members as to what shows suitably fit these genres. Universal appeal was found to be relatively rare: the divergent tastes of different family members was almost always evident. The romantic notion of the family sitting down to watch television was found to be a fleeting and mostly inaccurate one. The proliferation of programming and diffusion of communications technology in recent years has seemingly produced a situation in which television viewing is becoming an increasingly individual activity.

F. Television Under Control

Initially the hypothesis suggests that parents would be most likely to use television as a form of control: the high salience of programming for children making it a convenient tool for keeping order in the house. As opposed to the above section that deals with censorship of certain programs for reasons associated with the content of the program, this section deals with family member's control of the television access of others in the house for reasons other than those relating to content. There were found to be two types of usage in which parents would exert their control of the medium over their children.

One type of usage is related to control over what are considered to be inappropriate actions of the children by their parents. Sanctions against television are aimed at molding general behavior in some desired fashion. The other type of controlling usage apparent from the data was not tied to the behavior of the children *per se*. In several instances adults appeared to simply exercise their relative power through the conspicuous domination of the television.

Privilege Removal as Punishment

Taking away the privilege of watching television for the purpose of punishing behavior deemed inappropriate by parents was a commonly mentioned technique among the adults in the sample. Many parents mentioned that it was an effective deterrent to their children's negative behavior. It also appeared to be a more effective deterrent for younger children in the household and was thus used more frequently used against children of that age.

One father systematically outlined sanctions against television usage in the context of the various techniques employed in their 'traditional' household designed to mold the behavior of their two sons, aged nine and four.

> Interviewer- Do you ever use TV viewing as a reward or take it away as a punishment for the kids?
>
> Father- I've done that. If they end up in an argument or have been bad at school or something at one time or another. What we used to do is we give them three options. We say, "If you're bad at daycare, or at school, or whatever, first time nothing much happens. Second time, you get TV cut off. Third time, you give lickings after." Instead of giving them a licking right away, we give them options I guess.

The preceding list of 'options' were in essence a hierarchy of punishments ranging from less to more severe and were enacted on frequency of undesirable behavior and not directly on the child's preference.

Households of different role orientations in the sample used sanctions against television to mold their children's behavior. One mother in an egalitarian household illustrates its effectiveness in her household with her youngest son.

> Interviewer- Do you ever use TV as a reward or as a punishment for things that the kids do?
>
> Mother- Yes. Especially for [five year-old son], because it seems to affect him that much more. He looks forward to his regular viewing, and if he misbehaves, then I'll take away half an hour or an hour.

The high degree of salience of television for young children implicit in her statement seemed greater than for the older children in the sample. Thus, at least for controlling the behavior of young children in the household, sanctioning television viewing appeared to be a convenient way for parents to maintain control. In most instances it appeared that such sanctioning was effective in achieving the desired ends of those carrying out the sanctions.

Control as Ritualized Power

In several households another type of control over television viewing was exerted by parents in which viewing patterns were organized according to the programming choices of the adults (usually male adults). Adults more than children and males more than females were likely to impose choices on others in the household when more than one household member was engaged in watching television and when programming preferences were divergent. The result of such activities was a reinforcement of the existing power relationships in the family which tended to run vertically (parents over children) and horizontally (males over females). As a result, such occurrences were found to ritualize the existing power structure of the household.

Vertical Control

Although adults in most of the households reportedly watched much less television than their children, adult tastes in programming tended to supersede child tastes when the two were irreconcilable. In the case of one particular household the rationale underlying this 'household rule' of preferred viewership lay explicitly in the relative power of family members.

Son- What my dad does is he gets everyone mad. We're watching our show and then [he changes the channel].
Interviewer- So that happens every now and then?
Daughter- No. He does that about 20 times a show.

Father- I can watch three shows.
Interviewer- So when you're down there watching the shows together, its usually your dad who has the remote control?
Son- When I have it, I say, "Well I had it first!" And then he says, "Well I bought the TV!"

Here, as in other households, watching a particular program was often relatively unimportant for the adults. Control over the television set and thus over family members is intensified when the controlling adults do not even exhibit an alleged interest in any one particular program, but rather switch from program to program often and unexpectedly. The following exchange relates clearly to the ritualization of power in one particular household.

Mother- Dad likes to argue, "Oh I want to watch this!" just to bother us. And he'll switch the channel and slowly stop on each one. Go back and forth.
Interviewer- What do you think about that [father]?
Father- I think they're all lying! [Laughs] That way you can watch a whole bunch of shows at once.
Daughter- Why don't you give me the changer? I'd do it myself! Omission.
Father-
The one who has the [remote] control is in control!

In most cases this sort of behavior was characteristic of adult males in the sample.

Although viewing options existed for several who were not able to watch on the 'best' television set in the house (most households had more than one television), the other options were often less desirable (eg. other sets were more likely to have smaller screens, fewer channels, no VCR, no color, etc.). Not unexpectedly, therefore, availability of options did seem to relate to the seriousness of conflict when programming preference differences emerged. In one household where the 'second' television was only black and white and perceived as an unattractive alternative for both adults and parents, the 'battles' over what would be watched became a serious matter.

Father- We [father and son] have always had our struggles with the TV. Omission. He knows how to control it. He'll run it. Try to run it. I'll give in to him

sometimes, I'll see his arguments eh? Other than that, he thinks he's controlling it, but only to as much as I want him to.

Interviewer- Are the arguments you have [in] 'fun'?

Father- Sometimes. At first they were serious but now its getting less [after professional counselling].

In this particular household fights between the male adult and his children over control of the television were perhaps more serious and frequent than in other households. Nonetheless instances of this sort of encounter were not absent from most of the households interviewed. Despite the fact that the bases of power in egalitarian households, in contrast to nonegalitarian households, were by definition not tied intrinsically to family position, familial role-orientation did not seem to affect this practice in the households sampled.

Horizontal Control

Through the process of the interviews it became apparent that set control was largely a parental technique, it was not restricted to adults vis-a-vis children. Most of the adults in the sample did not monopolize control of the television with each other in most of the households interviewed. For the most part programming selection was easily reconciled between children of each household: there was a relatively high degree of congruence between children's program preferences as mentioned above.

The high salience of television for children and the relatively restricted set of alternatives for television viewing in the home, nonetheless, combined to set up a situation in which conflict over access was likely to occur. For those instances where such a congruence of preference was lacking there was evidence to suggest that children were actively involved in attempts at wresting control of the television set from other siblings in the house. In all households where there was more than one child of active viewing age contention between siblings appeared to be an issue at some point.

There were seven instances of sibling conflict over television from the interview data. Conflicts were typically resolved in one of two ways. If they were not severe and considered disruptive in the home by the adults then a negotiated settlement would take place. These settlements usually consisted of one child claiming territorial rights on the premier television in the household and demanding the other either watch the existing show or watch their show elsewhere (in households with more than one set).

Interviewer- Do you ever come in when your brother is watching something here on the main set and you want to watch something?
Sister- Ya.
Interviewer- And then what happens?
Sister- I'll just basically get to see my show anyways because my brother will keep on flicking the channels anyway.
Brother- No. I just stand up next to her and she just goes downstairs [to basement television set].

The solutions achieved did not appear to be uniformly in one person's favor. The preceding exchange was typical of the type of responses received to the question of how conflicts were resolved.

For conflicts between siblings concerning television that were considered disruptive or excessive to adults in the family the parents would often intervene and negotiate a settlement or demand a negotiation to take place. This seemed most common in situations involving younger children than older children in the house.

G. Parental TV Monitoring

The interviews conducted in the sample attempted to draw out whether male or female adults were more likely to engage in different styles of viewing in situations where children were present. It was expected that male parents would adopt a 'playmate' style of viewing as opposed to female parents who were expected to adopt an 'overseer' stance with respect to the children. Unfortunately the data received were not of sufficient quality to determine the

extent to which this differential orientation held. Consequently only a few brief comments are warranted.

Instances of viewing where both parents and adults were present were reported relatively infrequent. As mentioned above, the number of shows that had intergenerational appeal tended to be small. Where such instances were reported, there was not a great deal of elaboration and therefore the task of reconstructing the situation became difficult. Interviews of greater depth may have yielded more conclusive information.

Insofar as parental monitoring styles were reported there did not appear to be any gender differences. To the extent that certain shows were deemed appropriate or inappropriate for children both parents in most of the households seemed equally situated to deal with controlling access. For the most part parents, although expressing dislike for certain television shows, did not actively oversee the 'questionable' shows for the purpose of explaining or judging the content for the benefit of their children.

One ironic finding which surfaced in the households where children were young or often found to be bothersome, the television set itself operated as an overseer within the household. In several instances it was apparent that the television acted as an effective 'baby-sitter', especially when the parents were unavailable. This practice was one that was admitted only reluctantly. Several adults (mostly females) mentioned it was something they only did in 'extreme circumstances' and admitted feeling somewhat guilty when having to do so. Seemingly responsibility for the children, particularly for younger children, fell mostly on the mother in some of the households.

V. Conclusion

This thesis has been guided by two main objectives. The first objective has been to extend and in some instances counter the assumptions inherent in the uses and gratifications perspective in order to provide a bridge toward audience research originating from different traditions of research. The first two chapters are concerned with identifying the points of departure between various traditions and to seek points where convergences might be possible.

The original empirical contribution appearing in the third chapter enables the second objective of the research to be completed. The audience research conducted in this section exemplifies research that attempts to bridge the gaps between various traditions of research. In so doing, it provides an empirical contribution to the qualitative audience research literature, which has been and continues to be notoriously data poor. The exploratory nature of the audience study contained in this thesis provides a basis for future research employing more complex research designs involving combinations of methodologies both qualitative and quantitative in emphasis.

As a result of the dual objectives of the present research, useful extensions of uses and gratifications concepts have become possible. The nature of audience activity, the character of audience needs, and the identity of the value assumptions as stated in the uses and gratifications tradition have all been challenged.

The notion of the active audience member has always been central to the uses and gratifications tradition. Activity implies two separable components. First, activity implies the capacity of audience members to describe and relate their uses of media to others, including to the researcher. A second quality of audience activity implies that individuals are seen as having the ability to freely choose what media are consumed and the circumstances of their consumption.

The empirical study undertaken for this thesis assumes the first feature of the active audience, perhaps to a greater extent than in much of the uses and gratifications literature

itself. The semi-structured interview method employed allowed for a degree of latitude of response not characteristic of closed-ended questionnaires. Individuals were not lead to describe their media consumption in terms associated with media use. The ways in which the individuals constituting the audience 'used' media products became evident through the interviews. In this way, the empirical study presented in this paper assumed audience members (except for the very young) possess the ability to describe in considerable detail their television viewing habits. That they were often described in terms familiar to the uses and gratifications approach is evidence that their responses were not an artefact of a particular methodology.

The second component of audience activity involving the notion of unrestricted access to media and a direct correspondence of show preference to viewing patterns was one that was not confirmed by the findings of the empirical part of the thesis. With respect to the consumption of television, which usually takes place in the home, individuals were constrained by a number of factors that restricted their access to it. Besides the obvious restrictions of work and school, different people had other obstacles that defined the parameters within which media use could occur. Several women and some men in the sample had to attend to the care of children or to other domestic responsibilities that encroached upon their viewing time. Several children interviewed were constrained by curfew, censorship, and by conflicts with others in the house over the territorial status of the television when programming preferences did not coincide between family members. All of the multiple reasons for not watching mentioned indicate the complex nature of television viewing. Moreover, the availability of technology varies from household to household also constrains the possibilities for media use. Households in which there is only one television set provide few alternatives for household members. The growing popularity of VCRs and video games that use the television screen as a monitor extend the range of possible uses of television and potentially the demand on that piece of technology within the household. Like all media use, the practice

of watching television does not take place in a contextual vacuum.

As discussed in the literature review section, the concept of individual needs and the connection between needs and media uses or gratifications has been subject to debate in the literature. To a large extent, however, the needs fulfilled by the media have been described in individualistic terms: the need to know, the need to be entertained, etc. The position guiding the empirical component of this thesis is that, with respect to use of the medium of television, needs are focused at the systemic level of the family or household.

Thus the empirical research attempts to connect the individual user of television to larger social structures. By introducing concepts such as subcultural and extra and intra-family relations this task is accomplished. Determining how each of these systems operate and what actions are necessary to sustain and change these systems over time and how various systems interact and conflict are of key interest in this study. Individual media use is contextualized within a complex and changing set of interrelations.

The alleged value-neutrality of the uses and gratifications approach has been found to be untenable. Although aesthetic judgments are not made about the content of media consumed by people in the present empirical research nor in most of the gratifications literature, media use does nonetheless does imply a set of assumptions which are not value-neutral. The variety of television uses found in this paper relate to bases of differential power relationships. Insofar as the practice of watching or not being able to watch television helps to sustain these sets of relations it can not in-itself be considered value-neutral. And although the empirical research presented here does not consider in-depth the specific content of television programming, the ideas presented in programming via television which contribute to the existence of a set of relationships based on differential power must also be seen as value-laden.

Insofar as families and other groups have preexisted the advent of the mass media, the present research does not provide an indictment on media or television *per se*. It is unlikely

and not the position maintained here that certain media are responsible for the family dynamics that exist in the modern era. On the contrary, television, and by implication other media as well, are fit into daily routines in such a way that their functions in a wider context often go unnoticed. The present thesis contributes to what can be described broadly as a cultural studies approach to the audience in that it attempts to describe the viewing context in the broad context of a set of relationships based on differential power. The present study examines, if in a preliminary way, how some of these relationships involve and incorporate activities as seemingly mundane as 'watching the tube'.

In many of the households interviewed television was considered a valuable and (sometimes scarce) resource in the family. It was therefore implicated in numerous exchanges between household members. When a father uses the remote control to 'change the channels' on his children to watch nothing in particular, his greater power is ritually reinforced. When a mother who works full-time outside the home comes home and can not watch television attentively until just before she goes to bed because she is busy attending to the children and her husband 'traditional' family values take concrete form. Despite the fact that there were instances, particularly in 'egalitarian' households, where a more democratic approach to watching television was in evidence, on the whole there were significant uses of television which helped to maintain relationships based on differential power. This was found to be especially true (as in Morley's sample) of relationships based on gender differences, but it was also true of differences based on sub-cultural affiliation and on family position (ie. parent-child relations). What goes on in the television rooms of Canadian families is part of more complex social processes which can never be divorced from the act of 'watching television'.

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Appendix: Household Information

Household No.	1	2	3
Family Composition:	4 members	4 members	5 members
Marital Status:	Married	Married	Married
Age of Members in years:	Head Male: 40-49 Head Female: 40-49 Other M1: 15 Other F1: 14	Head Male: 30-39 Head Female: 30-39 Other M1: 9 Other M2: 4	Head Male: 40-49 Head Female: 30-39 Other M1: 17 Other F1: 13 Other M2: 8
Television Info.:	1. 8 yrs. 21" col. cable VCR rumpus room 2. 16 yrs. 12" b&w no cable computer room	1. 14 yrs. 19" col. cable VCR living room 2. 15 yrs. 10" b&w no cable downstairs	1. 1 yr. 19" col. cable VCR family room 2. 3 yrs. 19" b&w no cable M1's room 3. 6 yrs. 19" color cable basement
Family role-Orientation:	mean=24 intermediate	mean=14.5 traditional	mean=28.5 egalitarian
Adult (M) Occupation:	School Teacher (F-T)	Limosine Driver (F-T)	University Prof. (F-T)
Adult (F) Occupation:	Teacher (P-T)	Typist (P-T)	Graduate Student (F-T)
Adult (M) Education:	University Degree	Some High School	University Degree
Adult (F) Education:	University Degree	High School	University Degree
Home Status:	Own	Mortgage	Mortgage
Gross Income:	$40K-50K	$20K-30K	$70K-80K

Household No.	4	5	6
Family Composition:	5 members	5 members	4 members
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married
Age of Members in years:	Head Male: 40-49 Head Female: 30-39 Other F1: 13 Other M1: 10 Other F2: 8	Head Male: 30-39 Head Female: 30-39 Other F1: 11	Head Male: 40-49 Head Female: 40-49 Other F1: 13 Other M1: 9
Television Info.:	1. 1 yr. 28" col. cable VCR downstairs 2. 3 yrs. 10" col. cable kitchen	1. 5 yrs. 20" col. cable VCR family room	1. 7 yrs. 20" col. cable VCR family room
Family role-Orientation:	mean=23 intermediate	mean=15 traditional	mean=21.5 intermediate
Adult (M) Occupation:	Manager (F-T)	Plumber (F-T)	Manager (F-T)
Adult (F) Occupation:	Manager (F-T)	Secretary (F-T)	Graduate Student (F-T)
Adult (M) Education:	University Degree	Tech. Diploma	University Degree
Adult (F) Education:	Some University	Some University	University Degree
Home Status:	Own	Own	Own
Gross Income:	Above $80K	$40K-50K	$60K-70K

Household No.	7	8	9
Family Composition:	4 members	4 members	5 members
Marital Status	Married	Common-law	Married
Age of Members in years:	Head Male: 18-29 Head Female: 18-29 Other M1: 7 Other F1: 2	Head Male: 18-29 Head Female: 30-39 Other F1: 13 Other M2: 5	Head Male: 40-49 Head Female: 40-49 Other M1: 18 Other F1: 16 Other F2: 12
Television Info.:	1. 12 yr. 21" col. cable VCR living room	1. 15 yrs. 14" col. cable VCR living room	1. 8 yrs. 24" col. cable VCR living room 2. 10 yrs. 16" col. kitchen 3. 5 yrs. 14" col. cable
Family role-Orientation:	mean=26.5 egalitarian	mean=26.5 egalitarian	mean=16.5 traditional
Adult (M) Occupation:	Accountant (F-T)	Manager (F-T)	Salesman (F-T)
Adult (F) Occupation:	Social Worker (F-T)	N/A	Clerk (P-T)
Adult (M) Education:	Some University	High School	High School
Adult (F) Education:	Some University	Some High School	Some Technical School
Home Status:	Rent	Rent	Own
Gross Income:	$30-40K	$30K-40K	$40K-50K

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